

SPECIAL
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BATMAN AND THE JOKER



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Michael Keaton
as the Dark Knight

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DRUG CZAR

William Bennett
as the Dim Light

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HUD's crooked little house crashes down

By Jim Naureckas

WASHINGTON

This is the first of a three-part series.

President Bush's old campaign rival Jack Kemp is now faced with the unenviable job of cleaning up one of the largest messes left behind by the Reagan administration: the decimated, scandal-ridden Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Housing advocates and HUD staffers breathed a sigh of relief at the departure of Reagan's housing secretary, the disastrous Samuel Pierce, who seemed to take driving HUD into the ground as his mission.

Kemp, a standard-bearer for the right wing of the Republican Party, intends to be the party's presidential nominee in 1996, and this ambition will no doubt cause him to take very seriously the responsibilities of his highly visible new management position. But is a can-do attitude enough for the charismatic former quarterback to clean up the department he himself refers to as a "swamp"?

Under Pierce, the malfeasance at HUD reached epic proportions reminiscent of the Teapot Dome days of the Harding administration. Revelations coming out of ongoing congressional hearings and HUD's own internal investigations disclose a department corrupt from top to bottom:

- Pierce and other top officials awarded contracts worth tens of millions to developers who had used well-placed Republican consultants to win preferential treatment.
- HUD agents allegedly stole \$20 million from sales of HUD property. As much as \$100 million in housing-sale proceeds remains unaccounted for.
- Local HUD officials, including ones connected to Sen.

INSIDE STORY

Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY), allegedly awarded federally subsidized housing to cronies in return for political patronage.

Despite the seriousness of the charges—many of which have been admitted to by participants—the scandal so far has had slight impact on national politics. "I guess everyone's kind of burned out on Republicans getting

rich by illegal means," says Andrew Baker of the Institute for Community Economics, an advocacy group for non-profit housing cooperatives. And congressional Democrats, so effectively devastated by recent ethics attacks, seem content to let the sleaze issue die rather than trying to turn it around on the GOP.

But the main reason the subject is not generating more heat is that those responsible are largely out of office. Washington's media and political powers show little interest in holding Bush responsible for the abuses of the Reagan administration, and they seem to be overly optimistic that the replacement of Pierce with Kemp will solve the department's crisis.

House out of order: HUD's corruption was to a certain extent the result of a leadership vacuum at the top. Pierce, the only Cabinet secretary to serve throughout the entire Reagan administration, was such a non-entity that President Reagan once failed to recognize him, addressing him as "Mr. Mayor" at a conference. His nickname of "Silent Sam" was somewhat misleading, as Pierce did find time for more than 700 speeches during his eight years in office, almost two a week. To make those speeches, Pierce took first-class plane trips all over the world, paid for by HUD. Sometimes his accommodations were picked up by housing industry lobbyists with a direct interest in HUD policy. With Pierce setting the moral tone for the department, these practices were soon being emulated by underlings, most of whom had been selected for their political value to the Republican Party rather than for any knowledge of housing. "Nobody cared about the program," says one HUD employee who asked to remain anonymous. "It was more like a place to put party favorites."

Posts under Pierce were often not filled, due to wrangling over whether the secretary's or the president's cronies would be placed in them. The undersecretary spot—the No. 2 position in the department—went vacant for 16 months, as did as many as half the top jobs at any given time. Once appointed, HUD officials often had to make quick exits. Assistant Secretary Emanuel Savas resigned in 1983 when it was found that he used his subordinates to type and proofread his book, ironically titled *Privatizing the Public Sector*. And Deputy Undersecretary Gordon Walker left in 1986 after it was disclosed that he had made \$145,000 working in his spare time for a publisher of how-to-succeed-in-real-estate lessons. A deputy assistant secretary has recently been charged with giving a contract to a developer who had given his wife \$399,000.

This lack of an effective bureaucracy at HUD enabled Pierce's executive assistant, Deborah Gore Dean, to wield sweeping powers in the department. In her late 20s when she went to work for Pierce—with only slight work experience, and that in restaurant management and magazine publishing—Dean soon had the authority to go over the heads of senior staff. "She was running the department," claims Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA). Dean cited the Fifth Amendment in refusing to answer a congressional committee's questions about her role in the influence peddling that became rampant under Pierce's reign.

\$300,000 Watts of power: Developers, hoping to land HUD subsidies to rehabilitate their properties, gave many prominent Republicans massive fees for approaching Dean or Pierce. Among those GOP officials were former Interior Secretary James Watt, who received \$300,000 for several phone calls and one 30-minute meeting with Pierce; Carla Hills, now Bush's trade representative; Watergate-era Attorney General John Mitchell; Robert Weinberger, nephew of then-Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger; and the powerful Republican consulting firm of Black, Manafort, Stone & Kelly. Watt testified before a House Government Operations subcommittee that to get into the subsidized housing program, developers had to pay a "consultant" like himself the "going rate" of \$1,000 per housing unit. "I'm not defending the system," Watt said. "The system is flawed." Joseph Strauss, the HUD aide-turned-lobbyist who hired Watt, testified to the same subcommittee that "people who are politically well known had an absolute entree" into the rehabilitation program.

While the top of the department was operating like a clubhouse, the bottom was completely unsupervised. Officials at several branch offices were convicted of fraud during the Reagan administration, with no effort made by Pierce to clear up the problems. The latest example is Marilyn Harrell, the so-called "Robin HUD," who admits

diverting at least \$5.5 million from sales of HUD-owned properties for which she acted as broker. She says most of the money went to "Friends of the Father," her own unofficial, fundamentalist charity, which bought houses and cars for the poor, although she acknowledges that some of the money was "mingled" with her own finances. Other, perhaps less altruistic HUD agents also had their hands in the till. In many cases simply no one was checking to see whether the money from sales of HUD property was being given to the government.

Pierce did little to eliminate the burgeoning corruption in his department. One aide told the *Washington Post* that Pierce refused to take action against anyone who wasn't indicted. When HUD's inspector general, Paul Adams, finally began to look into the influence peddling last year, he says he was told by Pierce he was "moving too rapidly."

Laissez unfair: To blame all of HUD's problems on Pierce and his associates, however, is to identify the symptoms and not the disease. HUD's sickness was precipitated by a set of conservative policies and attitudes—policies and attitudes that had Kemp as one of their most fervent advocates.

HUD has been the severest victim of Reagan-era budget cuts, with outlays for subsidized housing dropping from \$26 billion to \$8 billion. The departmental staff was cut by a third, the only department to actually lose employees under Reagan. Pierce's negligence was the logical extension of the Reagan administration's hostility toward any public involvement in housing.

Kemp pointed out the hypocrisy of some of his conservative compatriots cashing in on subsidized housing: "There are a lot of folks who on one hand beat up on the government and, when they got their chance to make some money out of it, were willing to do so," he told CNN's *Evans and Novak*.

But Kemp is hardly independent of the government-bashing, moneymaking culture he condemns. Charles Black, of Black, Manafort, Stone & Kelly—a firm that accepted \$336,000 for acknowledged "influence peddling" in the HUD scandal—managed Kemp's 1988 campaign bid. Another partner, Roger Stone, is a longtime Kemp strategist.

Unlike Pierce, who once said that his department didn't deal with the problems of the homeless because they didn't have houses, Kemp is not openly contemptuous of his responsibilities. "I think he's going to be more than straight because he doesn't want to get tarred with anything," says Gail Cincotta, chair of the National People's Action, a coalition of housing groups. Her organization has already met twice with Kemp, two more times than it was ever allowed to meet with Pierce.

But Kemp's policy plans are mainly to stay the course. Having ruled that any attempt to restore any of HUD's lost budget is unthinkable, he counts on a new package of tax credits and enterprise zones to ameliorate the housing crisis. Critics charge that this reliance on incentives to the private sector is what attracted corruption in the first place, and that tax breaks will raise the deficit more than tax dollars spent directly on government creation of housing or grants to the non-profit sector.

Kemp's enthusiasm for selling public housing to its tenants—an idea borrowed from Margaret Thatcher's Britain—is also criticized as misplaced faith in a free market that has consistently demonstrated its inability to provide affordable housing. Many housing advocates urge a move in the opposite direction, toward more government involvement in housing creation and greater participation by non-profit community groups. In order to ensure affordable housing for poor and working-class Americans, "the government should start to see its resources as working against the stream of where the market is going," says the Institute for Community Economics' Baker.

While Kemp's active leadership promises to lead to a more vigorous department—unless he confirms media rumors that he plans to accept the National Football League chairmanship—it is doubtful that his HUD days will be much of a resume-builder. While replacing Reagan-era political appointees is a good start, it will be hard to make HUD functional again without also replacing Reagan-era assumptions about the federal role in providing housing.

Jim Naureckas is managing editor of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs' *Washington Report on the Hemisphere*.

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By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

IN 1984 LIBERALS CLOSELY WATCHED THE CAMPAIGN of former National Organization for Women Vice President Jane Wells-Schooley, who was trying to unseat three-term Republican Rep. Don Ritter in Pennsylvania's predominantly Democratic and industrial 15th District. While Wells-Schooley championed abortion rights and opposed contra aid, Ritter appeared to be the typical neanderthal conservative—pro-Star Wars, pro-contra, anti-gun control, anti-regulation and anti-welfare. But Ritter won the election fairly easily, largely because his district's blue-collar Democrats were turned off by Wells-Schooley's feminism.

The story doesn't end there, however. While Ritter has continued to vote a straight conservative ticket on South Africa, abortion and contra aid, he has increasingly broken with the Republican Party leadership on trade and industrial issues. Last year, for example, Ritter backed textile, plant-closing and foreign-investment-disclosure legislation opposed by President Ronald Reagan and the House Republican leadership.

More importantly, Ritter, a former engineer who earlier opposed government intervention in the free market, has become a leading proponent of industrial policy. Along with Democratic Rep. Mel Levine (D-CA), Ritter co-chairs the House caucus on high-definition television. Ritter wants the government to support a private-public consortium to develop a new generation of televisions.

His support for industrial policy is symptomatic of a sea change taking place in American politics. The underlying issue that shaped politics since World War II was the Cold War competition between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, but with the emergence of Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachov, it is giving way to a new set of concerns. Americans are now worried not about the threat of communism, but the threat of economic decline. They are not concerned about Soviet SS-20s, but about Japanese VCRs and Korean automobiles.

Politicians like Ritter who respond to these concerns find that they must venture outside the bounds of both "liberal" and "conservative" politics. They have to find new allies and create new coalitions. In doing so, they appear to be creating the most significant realignment in American politics since 1932.

Imperial nostalgia: After Ronald Reagan's landslide victory in 1980, Republican strategists like Richard Wirthlin talked confidently of a new conservative Republican realignment. It is now clear that Reagan's 1980 and 1984 victories were not like the elections of 1932-48, which ushered in the Democrats' half-century long ascendancy, but rather like those of 1920-1928, which proved to be a conservative transition between Republican and Democratic progressivism.

In the 1980 and 1984 elections, Reagan adroitly fused Cold War fears of communism with new fears of economic decline. Reagan capsulized these fears in his 1980 pledge to "restore America's place in the sun" through increased military spending and reduction of taxes and regulations. In 1984 Reagan proclaimed a "new morning," but in his most negative ad warned of the Soviet bear that was still lurking in the forest.

Reagan and his advisers sought to exploit

An ideological guide to the 'decline' debate

Americans' wish to ward off the future by recreating the past, whether through restoring military supremacy of the early Cold War or the economic individualism of the old frontier. But the effect of Reagan's policies was to accelerate America's economic decline.

The facts are well known: during Reagan's years, the U.S. went from creditor to debtor nation and our trade and budget deficits soared to record heights. This continued decline, combined with the thaw in the Cold War, undermined the political basis of Reagan conservatism. George Bush's vicious 1988 campaign was a final attempt to summon up the ghosts of prior campaigns.

The change in American politics is apparent in shifting congressional coalitions

Over the next two decades American politics will revolve around our fall from economic predominance.

around trade and industrial issues. On these issues, the South and industrial North tend to back trade relief regardless of party or overt ideology. The only consistent Senate opponents to trade relief are Rocky Mountain Republicans like Malcolm Wallop (R-WY) and William Armstrong (R-CO). Surprisingly, Minority Whip Newt Gingrich (R-GA), the scourge of the Democrats, has been a leading critic of Eastern Airlines President Frank

Lorenzo and has backed union joint-ownership proposals.

The underlying political change has also registered in opinion polls. In an extensive poll released in June for the *World Policy Institute*, political consultant Stanley Greenberg found that anxieties about American economic decline and Japanese economic superiority had far outstripped the communist menace in the average voter's consciousness.

Greenberg found that nearly three-fourths of voters rated as "extremely serious" or "very serious" the threat posed by "foreign investors buying up American companies and land." Two-thirds of respondents were equally worried about "foreign competition for American industry and jobs," "the loss of America's lead in technology" and "America's trade imbalance with foreign countries." By contrast, only one-third of the voters surveyed believed that Soviet aggression was an extremely or very serious threat; and only 2 percent thought it was "the most important problem facing America today."

Judging from Greenberg's results, American politics over the next two decades will revolve around America's economic, rather than military, decline. If there is an external threat, it is likely to be identified with Japan rather than the Soviet Union. As before, there will be still be "liberal" and "conservative," "left" and "right" alternatives, but they will be redefined around these new issues.

Economic nationalism: In addressing the trade deficit and industrial decline, most politicians and policymakers agree on certain things like aid to education. But they strongly disagree about how the U.S. and its

corporations should conduct themselves in the world market. At the risk of oversimplifying matters, the following different approaches can be distinguished:

• **Progressive economic nationalism:** Progressives, hearkening back to Theodore Roosevelt's "New Nationalism," argue that America's economic ills are attributable not only to foreign trade barriers and unfair pricing, but to American corporate practices. They back aggressive policies that hold both our economic competitors and our own multinationals accountable.

• **Right-wing economic nationalism:** Right-wingers encourage xenophobic reactions to the Japanese threat—creating an unsavory brew of anti-Japanese, anti-immigrant and anti-black resentment. But the right has joined the left in pressing for action against both unfair traders and multinationals.

• **Corporate nationalism:** Many American business leaders are now ready to take action against Japan and other Asian countries for trade barriers and illegal dumping, but they are extremely wary of any attempt to regulate American-based multinationals. They have even opposed innocuous measures to gain greater knowledge of foreign investments in the U.S.

• **Liberal anti-nationalism:** Some current liberals identify any challenge to foreign trade barriers with xenophobia and racism. They blame America's problems entirely on American corporate behavior.

• **Geopolitical anti-nationalism:** State and Treasury Department officials reject any measure that might disturb the military arrangements between the U.S. and its Atlantic and Pacific allies.

• **Fifth-column anti-nationalism:** Last year Japanese firms alone spent more on lobbying in Washington than the top five American business organizations put together. Many American firms like Ampex are now so dependent on foreign suppliers that they act as "fronts" for foreign firms and governments. These firms and lobbyists can be expected to invoke the dogmas of free trade against any interference in the world market.

As the example of Don Ritter shows, Congress is increasingly dominated by the three varieties of economic nationalism. But a curious alliance of liberal, geopolitical and fifth-column anti-nationalism holds sway over the executive branch, the national media and the Washington establishment. Sen. Bill Bradley (D-NJ), *Newsweek* columnist Robert Samuelson, *Washington Post* columnist Hobart Rowen and Japan lobbyists Stanton Anderson and Robert Gray are each ready to cry "trade war" or "Japan bashing" any time someone suggests overseeing foreign investment or protesting Japanese or Korean trade barriers. This alliance has blocked congressional action, setting the stage for another populist fusillade against "Washington elitism." The only question is whether it will come from the left or the right.

The left is of two minds about economic decline. Since the early '70s, the labor movement has stressed progressive economic nationalism, but the survivors of the '60s left have either been indifferent to this issue or have charged that concerns about foreign trade and investment are racist. Such an attitude not only ignores the reality of a world in which the U.S. alone refuses to pursue a national economic strategy, but it also will condemn these leftists to irrelevance in the decades ahead.



Seth Tobocman, United Feature Syndicate

By Joel Bleifuss

The "pre-emptive defense"

A report in *Intelligence Newsletter* indicates that in 1982 the Justice Department was proposing legislation to outlaw the assassination of a foreign individual outside of the U.S., but the CIA objected and the bill was dropped. The information comes from transcripts, obtained by the Paris-based biweekly, of closed-door meetings of the Iran-contra committee. Those transcripts show that on August 19, 1987, Deputy Assistant Attorney General Mark Richard testified that when the legislation banning assassination was being drawn up, CIA Director William Casey "wanted assurances that this proposal would not reach authorized conduct of the agency." Further, both the CIA and the Pentagon wanted "comprehensive assurance ... that personnel—duly authorized—engaging in activities [such as assassinations] otherwise covered by the statute would not fall within the statute." Richard testified the CIA was represented in the matter by Stanley Sporkin, who before President Reagan appointed him in 1986 as a federal judge, was the CIA's general counsel. (According to Richard's testimony, Casey asked Sporkin in 1982 for a legal opinion on a CIA proposal to "neutralize" suspected terrorists. Sporkin concluded that such "neutralizations" were legal because they were not really assassinations; they were, rather, "pre-emptive defensive actions.") The Justice Department complied with the CIA request to the extent that the department provided a letter stating that the anti-assassination legislation was "interpreted as not applying to authorized government conduct." According to Richard, this did not satisfy Casey, who would settle for nothing less than "an express provision in the statute exempting authorized intelligence activities [like assassinations]." Faced with the prospect of officially legalizing U.S.-sponsored assassination, the Justice Department abandoned its proposal, which by maintaining the status quo achieved the same end.

The timeless truth of I.F. Stone

Groundbreaking journalist I.F. Stone died on June 18, as President Bush was pushing to decrease the capital gains tax—another drop in the steady stream of green that trickles up from Washington to the rich. *In These Times* was reminded of a story that appeared in *I.F. Stone's Weekly* on May 13, 1968, as thousands of poor people marched on Washington in the months after Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. The article was titled "The rich march on Washington all the time" and read, in part, "To see the Poor People's March on Washington in perspective, remember that the rich have been marching on Washington ever since the beginning of the republic. They came in carriages and they come on jets. They don't have to put up in shanties. Their object is the same but few respectable people are untactful enough to call it handouts.... The tax structure and the laws bear the imprint of countless marches on Washington; these have produced billions in hidden grants for those who least need them. Across the facade of the U.S. Treasury should be engraved, 'To him who hath shall be given.' One easy and equitable way to finance an end to abject poverty in this country would be to end the many tax privileges the wealthy have acquired.... Few people realize that our present tax and welfare structure is such as to encourage the wealthy to speculate and the poor to vegetate. If a rich man wants to speculate, he is encouraged by preferential capital gains and loss provisions.... But if a poor man on relief took a part-time job he had until very recently to pay a 100 percent tax on his earnings in the shape of a dollar-for-dollar reduction in his relief allowance.... Much of the crime in the streets springs from hunger in the home. Much of this hunger is also linked to handouts for those who do not need them.... One farm company in California, J.G. Boswell, was given \$2,807,633 in handouts by the Treasury [in 1966].... Such are the huge hogs that crowd the public trough. Other even bigger corporations live on the gravy that drips from the military and space programs.... The arms race and the space race guarantee the annual incomes of many in the country-club set.... Ours is a warfare, not a welfare state. And unless the better conscience of the country can be mobilized, it will wage war upon the poor, too.... At this dangerous juncture we need a crusade of the progressive well-to-do to supplement the efforts of the poor people's march.... And we need an army of young white idealists to ring doorbells in the suburbs and awaken the middle class to the crisis the poor may precipitate. What lies ahead may be far more important than the elec-



Blood on the tuna: More than 500 demonstrators descended on the headquarters of the American Tunaboat Association on June 13 to protest the killing of dolphins by the tuna industry. The protest was organized by, among others, Earth First! and Earth Island Institute to coincide with the International Whaling Commission (IWC) meetings being held in San Diego that same week. At those meetings representatives from New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom, three of the commission's 30 member nations, called on the IWC to protect all cetaceans, including the small whales and dolphins.

Our man in Recife

In December 1968, Ricardo Zarattini, a member of the Brazilian Communist Party, was picked up by the secret police for helping coordinate strikes by rural workers in north-eastern Brazil. Within days of his arrest and subsequent torture at the Department of Political and Social Order in the city of Recife, Zarattini was interrogated by an official from the local U.S. Consulate.

Last month Zarattini, now an aide to a Brazilian congresswoman, saw a photograph in a newspaper and recognized his former inquisitor—Richard H. Melton, the likely appointee U.S. ambassador to Brazil. The U.S. Embassy, while denying that Melton "participated in any episodes of that type," has confirmed he served as vice consul in Recife between 1967 and 1969.

President Bush has not yet officially announced who will be the

new ambassador. But in Brazil Melton's appointment is regarded as inevitable and, in most circles, unacceptable. The Brazilian Foreign Relations Ministry, which routinely approves appointments of all foreign ambassadors, refused to rule on Melton, leaving the decision to President José Sarney. Sarney, generally solicitous of the U.S., demonstrated a brief flash of independence on June 1 by ordering his diplomats "to prevent Melton from being nominated am-

bassador to Brazil." But a few days later Sarney for some reason changed his mind and accepted Melton's appointment.

State Department officials claim Brazilian resistance to Melton stems primarily from his supposed lack of diplomatic stature. That is false, as anybody reading the Brazilian press knows. It is precisely Melton's stature as an agent of U.S. Latin American policy that has caused alarm. Even before Zarattini's revelations, the *Jornal do Brasil* reported, "The Placio do Planalto [the Brazilian White House] is not hiding its frustration with the American government that is sending to Brazil a diplomat whose career is marked by accusations of interference in the internal affairs of the countries in which he has worked."

That 25-year career wanders a bloody path of U.S. intervention in the Western Hemisphere. In 1965, months after the U.S. invasion, Melton arrived in the Dominican Republic as a commercial officer at the U.S. Embassy. His next foreign post was Brazil, where the military junta, installed three years earlier in a U.S.-backed coup, was busy containing

"subversives" through arrest, disappearance and assassination. Lawyer Paulo Cavalcanti defended nearly 500 political prisoners in Recife. Melton's base in the late '60s. He told the newsmagazine *Veja*, "In Recife alone there were 14 American vice consuls. The majority were CIA agents." According to former CIA agent John Stockwell, in the '60s the vice consular post was "traditional CIA cover in political offices overseas."

But whether Melton was with the CIA or not, his government service over the years has accomplished the same purposes. As head of the State Department's Central America desk in 1985 and at Elliott Abrams side, he promoted the illegal contra war and, in violation of the Boland Amendment, worked to deliver aid to the Costa Rican-based contra leader Eden Pastora. A recent report by the Council on Hemispheric Affairs quotes from a memo he sent Abrams in May 1986: "We are pursuing a sophisticated strategy ... to ensure passage of ... aid to the Nicaraguan resistance.... Our support will not slacken whatever the results in Contadora [the peace initiative that

was sponsored by five Latin American nations]." The report also mentions Melton's role in coordinating Gen. John Singlaub's 1986 clandestine trip to Asia to snag \$10 million for the contras.

All this was a prelude to his dispatch in April 1988 as ambassador to Nicaragua, where he lasted for three months before being expelled for insulting government officials, funding opposition groups and encouraging a violent demonstration in Ndaime. As Alexander Cockburn reported in *The Nation*, Melton told a visiting U.S. delegation, "The people here are amazingly friendly, when you figure we're here to overthrow their government."

Given the upsurge of the Brazilian left in advance to this fall's elections—the first free elections to be held there since 1960—the nomination of Melton is a reflection of the fundamentals of Bush's hemispheric policy. The outgoing ambassador to Brazil is Harry Shlaudeman, who at the start of the '70s was in the U.S. Embassy in Santiago, hard at work subverting Salvador Allende's democratically elected government in Chile.

—Rich McKerrow

Funding alternatives

It used to be a sad but truism that "left cause" was synonymous with "broke." Mainstream foundations shied away from funding "controversial" organizations.

But since 1979 there has been an alternative alternative. Left groups seeking money and left philanthropists willing to provide it can now turn to the Funding Exchange, the only national coalition of progressive community funds.

In spite of, or because of, the policies of the Reagan years, the Exchange in its first decade handed out more than \$30 million to causes like economic justice, the environment, disarmament, government accountability and the rights of women, workers and gays and lesbians.

The Funding Exchange was formed when community funds in San Francisco, Philadelphia, Boston, Los Angeles, New York and Eugene, Ore., got together to set some national standards and encourage the creation of other alternative funds. To date the Funding Exchange consists of 15 community-based funds and three New York-based national charities. Commitment to what they call "empowerment philanthropy"—as opposed to "traditional philanthropy"—binds the funds together.

Traditional philanthropy, according to the Funding Exchange, alleviates but does not cure social problems. The Exchange seeks to fund "empowerment" groups that will take on the root causes of inequality and injustice. "Change, not charity" is the organization's motto, and to that end the Exchange last year gave \$3,500 to the

Center for Cuban Studies, \$5,500 to the National Women's Health Network, \$13,000 to the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights and some \$3 million to 400 other causes.

Many founders of the charter community funds were wealthy leftists who rejected the tradition of individual philanthropy, where the donor has exclusive say over which organizations received funding. Part of the reason for the movement away from private philanthropy are the tensions that would commonly arise between righteous leftists with no money and rich leftists funding their causes. Says Nan Rubin, special projects director for the Funding Exchange, "Some thought, what made them so special that people should be accountable to them for their organizing?" It is for this reason that the boards of directors of all the community and national funds recruit left "activists" to sit on their grantmaking committees.

Donors to the exchange may get more involved if they give enough. Those who contribute more than \$20,000—they account for 75 percent of the money distributed nationally, 25 percent of local money—may choose the organizations they wish to support from a docket of organizations approved by the Exchange staff in consultation with activists.

Wealthy leftists have long had to deal with the problem of being a member of a left culture that tends to indict wealthy people. According to Rubin, the Exchange sponsors seminars and conferences to allow donors to discuss their feelings of isolation and to learn how to use their resources for socially responsible investing and giving.

Says Rubin, "When [donors]

started getting together and talking they realized that it was the first time in their lives they actually could be honest about their political commitment and the contradiction of what it meant for them to have money."

The Crossroads Fund, the Funding Exchange's Chicago affiliate, is one of the 15 community funds. It has distributed \$750,000 since its creation in 1980, last year giving out \$100,000 in 41 grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000. Groups who received money included a women's center that is creating a seminar on sexuality and homophobia, a group that gives legal aid to incarcerated mothers, a Guatemala solidarity organization, public housing residents trying to win self-management of a Chicago Housing Authority project and a coalition that is working to keep open a factory whose corporate owners have moved unionized manufacturing jobs to a non-union plant.

The Chicago Committee in Solidarity with Southern Africa (CCISSA) received a \$2,000 grant from Crossroads to educate Chicagoans about Southern Africa and to support divestment. Spokeswoman Carol Thompson says two other funds turned down her group's requests for grants, citing CCISSA's "political nature." Thompson says the Funding Exchange and Crossroads are easy to work with, because staff and board members are dedicated to their own social justice work. "You see a real commitment there to making this work," she says. "I find it sometimes frustrating with some of the other foundation people that I have to deal with and I feel that they're not necessarily doing this stuff themselves."

Mary Nick-Bisgaard

tion... If this fails, multiracialism and non-violence will fail with it. Yet fail it must unless the middle class and the suburb can be aroused to pressure Congress for the steps required to wipe out poverty. There is nothing, Martin Luther King said, 'except a tragic death wish, to prevent us from reordering our priorities, so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war.' Now is the time for the white and the fortunate to organize themselves for this work of solidarity."

Unabashed liberal enters 1990 race

Zolton Ferency, a Michigan State University professor of criminal justice and a prominent democratic socialist in Michigan, has filed as a Democratic candidate for state senate, 24th District. Ferency says he is announcing his candidacy early—the primary will be held on August 7, 1990—because "it takes time to form an organization, to raise money and to take your message to the people." Explaining his reasons for running, Ferency told Chris Christoff of the *Detroit Free Press*, "I'm madder than hell and I'm not going to take it any more, this whole attack on liberalism." In a prepared release, Ferency says he wants "to restore liberalism to its rightful and honored place in American political dialogue." He says Republican charges that liberalism is un-American "have created a temporary political climate of hysteria, and the Democratic Party, along with others, have shamefully retreated in the face of those charges instead of counterattacking the rabid reactionaries making them." As Ferency explained to *In These Times*, "If we can't rescue the L-word, we may as well kiss the S-word goodbye."

Comforting the comfortable

On the eve of the Eastern Airlines strike, company President Frank Lorenzo took out full-page ads in major newspapers attacking the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. But as *Extra*, the newsletter of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, points out, Lorenzo's image manipulators didn't have to do much work; the ad copy had already been written on the editorial pages of the nation's newspapers of record. For example, he used a large chunk of the editorial "Labor threatens the president," a hand-wringing analysis of the "cost of appeasing" labor that was published this past February in the *New York Times*. Robert Bruno, a New York University graduate student in labor studies, surveyed the *Times*' coverage of the Eastern strike and discovered that in four successive editorials the *Times* accused the unions of "threatening" President Bush, vital transport links, airline travelers and other carriers. Further, the *Times* news stories directly quoted company representatives 26 times and labor only 17. The *Times* described Lorenzo as a "pragmatist," "strategist" and "tough manager." The paper of record's harshest words for him were that he embodied "the tumultuous era of airline deregulation." Conversely, union leaders were called "brash," "mystical" and "pugnacious"—not the kind of people you want running an airline. Bruno discovered that at the *Times*, editorial opinion and news reporting sometimes merge. In March reporter John Cushman wrote, "Should Bush take on the union, it might send the same kind of signal that President Reagan delivered in 1981 when he disbanded the striking air traffic controllers' union. Reagan managed to prove that he could not be intimidated by a potential crippling of transportation service."

Sexually responsive culture

If on your next visit to Moscow you want to see some flesh, check out Tram Repairing Station's House of Culture—the USSR's first officially sanctioned strip joint. According to Seth Goldman of *Newsday*, there you will see a troupe of four 21-year-old women wearing, at various times in their performance, wedding dresses, lace, G-strings and nothing at all. The fifth member of the troupe is a bald man with a bow tie who intermittently during the show appears on stage and squeezes the women in various places. Street cars rumble by as the four self-described actresses move across a stage under a banner that reads "Glory to the Great Soviet People, Builders of Communism, Dedicated Campaigners for Peace in the World!" The 100-seat house is always full. Goldman reports that a man with wife in tow analyzed the proceedings. "This show is a remedy for hypocrisy. It is a breakthrough of official barriers despite its low quality." Two young, slightly drunk men who took an overnight train from Byelorussia to take a peek were less critical. One of them said, "We approve of this new approach." As does actress Irina Gavrilina, who says, "If Lenin were alive, he would approve. He was human too."



United Auto Workers President Owen Bieber: "Where the power of persuasion fails, we will use the persuasion of power without hesitation."

Worried autoworkers shy away from new directions

By David Moberg

ANAHEIM, CALIF.

DEMOCRACY ISN'T AN EASY FORM OF GOVERNMENT, former Congresswoman Barbara Jordan reminded the 2,100 delegates to the United Auto Workers' triennial convention in late June. It was a timely warning. Democracy—in both the workplace and the union—was the hot issue before the UAW representatives.

The union has moved increasingly into joint union-management programs that cover topics ranging from worker education

to improving product quality. Proponents defend them as necessary moves to save jobs and as steps toward economic democracy.

But critics argue that while many of the individual programs are good, an overall union strategy of "jointness" has led union officials to identify more with corporate aims and ignore legitimate worker discontent.

UAW CONVENTION

They contend that consequently the union's own internal democracy has been weakened

and that rank-and-file members are losing their voice.

The critics, mainly linked in a loose New Directions Movement, were overwhelmed at the convention, losing every contested resolution and their two regional director races. But they did provoke what was probably the most vigorous debate since the early '50s. They also prodded the dominant administration caucus to issue caveats about the joint programs while still vigorously defending them.

At times the debate has been framed as a choice between cooperative or adversarial relations between management and labor. But UAW President Owen Bieber told delegates "that if joint programs get off the track or if joint programs are abused, we're going to fix them or we're going to throw them out.... Where the power of persuasion fails, we will use the persuasion of power without hesitation."

For their part, most critics acknowledged that some joint programs can be useful, such as alcohol and drug abuse treatment as alternatives to discharge, or even consultations

The reformists lost, but the debate was the best since the '50s.

on bringing new work to a factory. New Directions has criticized some new assembly line work teams as a form of speed-up, but not all critics would abolish the teams. New Directions delegate Mark Masaoka, from the Van Nuys, Calif., General Motors plant, said workers there were mainly disappointed that the team has not given them promised job security or a meaningful voice.

New Directions leaders call for more com-

prehensive rank-and-file decision-making, better job security and other quids pro quo in exchange for workers' money-saving ideas and systematic efforts to prevent management from pitting workers or local unions against each other in competition for jobs ("whipsawing"). They want the union to have its own clearly defined, worker- and community-oriented agenda for these joint programs. They want extraordinary precautions to prevent appointed union representatives on joint programs—who can number in the hundreds in large locals—from becoming co-opted by management.

Whipsaw worries: The UAW has not provided comprehensive guidelines for locals entering joint programs, but the new Report of the Commission on the Future of the UAW concludes that "the solution to problems and potential abuses [of joint activities] is to define some basic ground rules and prepare our people to participate successfully."

Most local leaders seem to fall in some middle ground—willing to experiment with joint efforts, often in a desperate quest to save jobs, but wary about how they operate. For example, there is profound anxiety about whipsawing even among pro-administration officers. Yet many leaders have been cowed by the heavy job losses of the past decade. "Only thing wrong with Mr. Tucker is his militancy," said delegate Brenda Tilley, who was voting for the administration-backed challenger to New Directions leader Jerry Tucker. "Anything he's for, a union person would be for, but it's not going to happen. People are just too scared."

Russell Cook, a shop committeeman and Bieber backer at a huge Buick local in Flint, Mich., says that by studying the company business plans and "by jointly sitting down

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Freed South African unionist thanks UAW

Last April, Moses Mayekiso, the 40-year-old leader of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, was acquitted of all charges of treason, subversion and sedition brought against him for organizing workers in the black township of Alexandra.

The judge's ruling not only spared him from the death penalty but also created new legal precedents for community and union organizers. And Mayekiso says flatly that the international campaign for his freedom, led in the U.S. by the UAW, "made us win the case." The Autoworkers mobilized mass membership letter-writing, rotating fasts and legal observer teams.

Now he is fighting the new Labor Rela-

tions Amendment Act that could fragment unions and subject them to extreme penalties for striking. But he has also returned to organizing for affordable housing and basic utilities in Alexandra.

Mayekiso's 190,000-member union doesn't trust the cold warriors at the AFL-CIO but works closely with the UAW, whose convention he addressed. The union's effective international work is a matter of both principle and self-interest. Adding labor rights provisions to trade bills and helping fledgling unions in countries like South Korea could not only help worldwide democratic unionism but also increase domestic markets in Third World auto-producing countries and reduce low-wage competition. —D.M.

By Jonathan Gill & Lisa Easterling

LOGAN, W.VA.

WHEN WEST VIRGINIA GOV. GASTON Caperton accepted an invitation to speak at the National Coal Association's 1989 convention, he wasn't too concerned about what to say. Coal production and profits were up after a nationwide slump in the early '80s, and Caperton brought with him the state's reputation as a playground for strip miners. But by the time he arrived at the luxurious Greenbrier resort in White Sulphur Springs on June 23, almost 50,000 coal miners in 10 states had walked off the job. They had done so in sympathy with about 1,900 Pittston Coal Group miners in West Virginia, Virginia and Kentucky who began striking in April after working for 14 months without a contract.

Caperton shot straight up the middle, offering to open his mansion on the banks of the Kanawha River in Charleston to round-the-clock negotiations between Pittston and the United Mine Workers of America (UMW)—as if the union and one of the country's biggest and most notorious coal companies were moral equivalents. UMW President Richard Trumka immediately accepted. Pittston refused.

The miners began settling in for a strike that will last, in their own words, as long as it takes. In recent years UMW members and their supporters have reacted to every coal strike with apocalyptic pronouncements about the demise of the union. But if the current wildcat strikes can't bring Pittston to a contract, the era when the UMW can stand up to the big coal operators at contract time might be over.

"If Pittston goes the way it wants to go, the majority of the union membership feels the UMW will collapse," says Roger Henry, a 14-year union veteran and one of the first wildcat strikers to walk off the job in the second week of June.

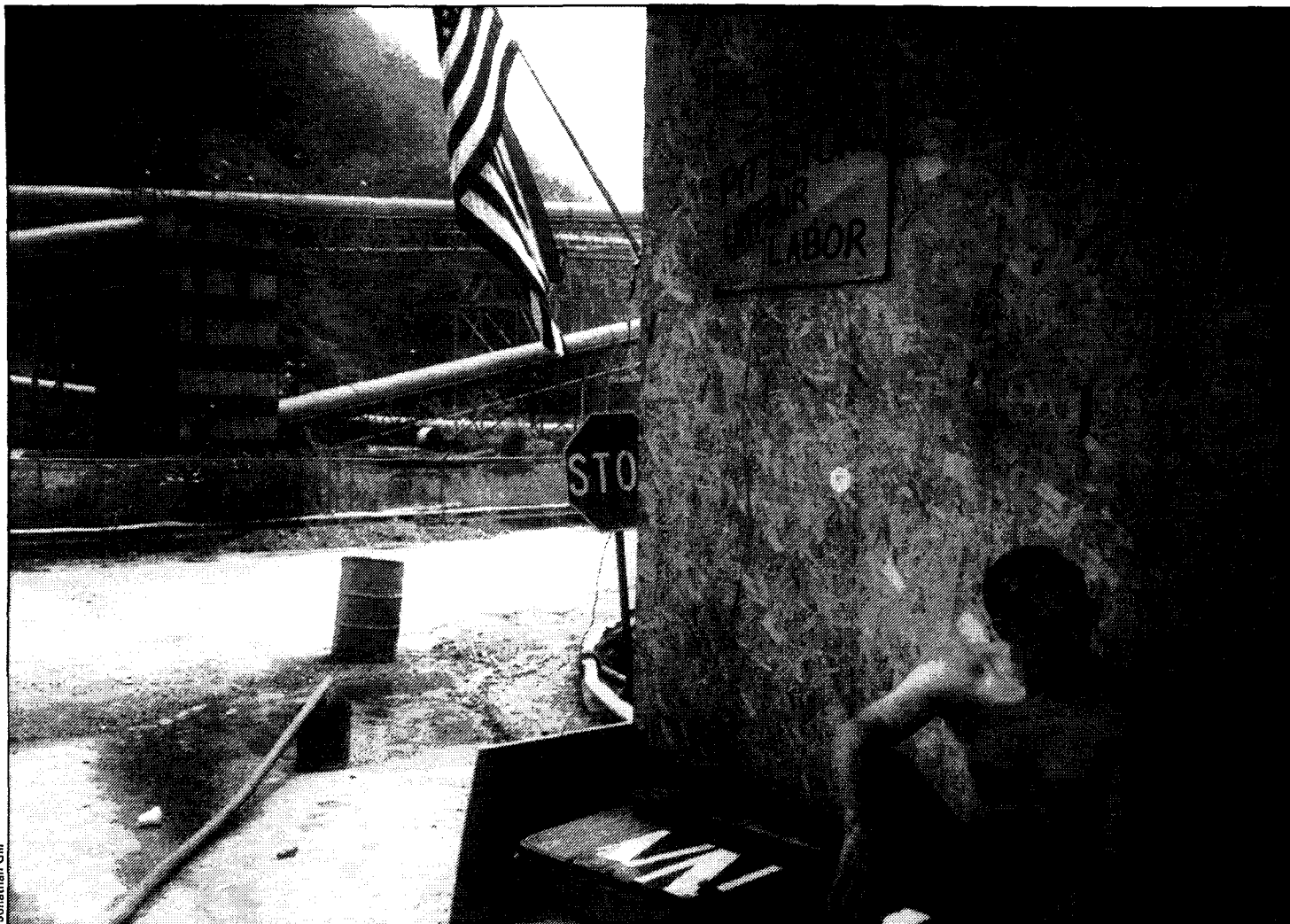
A resident of Logan, W.Va., Henry speaks for many of the miners who have walked off the job without pay in West Virginia, Alabama, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Virginia. "I've earned a good living in the coal mines," Henry says, watching his son get a haircut on a Saturday afternoon at the barbershop in this tiny coal town straddling the Guyandotte River in the heart of the Appalachian coalfields. "At the same time, I wouldn't want my child to work in the coal mines."

In two weeks off the job he's lost about \$2,000 in pay, but Henry won't go back to work until Pittston settles with the union.

Pittston's spark plug: The nation's biggest coal strike in almost a decade began when the union signed a national contract with the Bituminous Coal Operators Association in early 1988. Pittston refused to sign the contract, citing special needs for its labor force, and asked for a separate agreement with the union. As it turned out, those special needs included forcing miners to work unlimited overtime and eliminating contributions to the miners' pension fund.

Pittston miners continued to work under the terms of the old contract even when the company cut off medical benefits to retired and disabled miners and their widows. After 14 months—an extraordinary expression of good faith, because miners traditionally have refused to work without a contract—they donned camouflage and began sitting down in entrances to Pittston mines. Such acts of peaceful civil disobedience landed more

It's the Pittston for UMW strikers



Time out at the tippie: striking miner Jack Huff sit-pickets Pittston at Rum Creek, W.Va.

than 2,000 miners and their families in jail in Virginia and earned the union about \$3 million in fines.

On June 7 Pittston pulled out of federally mediated negotiations. The wildcat strikes began in West Virginia five days later and quickly spread to surrounding states. "Our government stands up and fights for freedom in Poland and China and Nicaragua," Trumka

LABOR

said at a union rally at the state capitol in Charleston hours before the wildcat strikes began. "Where are the cries of protest when it's an American worker having his or her rights trampled?"

As *In These Times* went to press, the strike didn't appear to be working. With the wildcat walkout entering its third week, Pittston hadn't been impressed by the display of solidarity within the UMW and had unilaterally imposed its own contract on the miners. And despite the fact that the coal industry has large stockpiles and plenty of non-union miners still at work, many of the companies hit by the wildcat strikes are fighting back. Hundreds of miners in several states are being fined and held in contempt of court for violating the clause in the national contract banning such strikes.

That has only increased tension in what has been a relatively peaceful strike so far. Some miners are arming themselves, claiming that the police and company guards have guns and aren't afraid to use them. By the wildcat strike's second week there were reports of gunfire on picket lines in Alabama and West Virginia.

"If they break the UMW, they're going to break the CIO and go right on down the line like dominoes," says Charles Hatfield, a retired union coal miner who left the mines with black lung disease after 35 years. He also has arthritis in his knees and spine from

spending days bent over in mine shafts. "If they don't get this thing settled it's gonna be another revolution, just like in the beginning."

Given the current state of the U.S. coal industry, the miners are—to paraphrase Albert Camus—fighting a lie in the name of a half-truth. Even if the mining and use of coal could be justified in terms of its environmental impact, union miners have no place in the coal industry's future. In recent years the industry has racked up record production levels and profits with fewer and fewer miners.

In 1987 the coal industry mined more than 915 million tons, close to a 40 percent increase in 10 years, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. But automation made it possible for half the number of workers—about 140,000—to do it, according to the U.S. Mine Safety and Health

If the spreading wildcat strikes can't bring the Pittston company to a contract, the era when the United Mineworkers can stand up to the big coal operators might be over. If Pittston wins, say miners, the union might just collapse.

Administration. And more and more of the jobs that remain are going to non-union miners.

Feeding the wildcats: The UMW has only about 65,000 members today, compared to almost half a million during World War II. Increasingly, the nation's coal is coming from non-union strongholds in the Midwest and the West. The federal government says Montana, Illinois and Wyoming make up for almost 60 percent of minable coal reserves.

Pittston President Paul Douglas, who lives in New York City, told *In These Times*, "We have no ambitions to see this issue become a great public debate about the position of labor and the position of this union. It's definitely not symbolic for Pittston."

About half of the country's United Mine Workers began their scheduled two-week vacations on June 23, so for now it's unclear how much pressure striking wildcat miners are putting on Pittston and other companies. Some say Pittston's spurning of Caperton's request is going to incite even more wildcat strikes and violence when the vacation period ends.

The miners themselves are ready for a long and possibly violent confrontation with the coal industry. Striking Pittston miner Rick Vance looks out from the picket shack across the street at the idled tipples and silos of the Elkay Mining Co., a Pittston subsidiary near Rum Creek, W.Va. He's convinced the wildcat strikes will grow and ultimately bring Pittston back to the bargaining table. He's not so sure what's going to happen after that.

"It was handed to us on a silver platter," says Vance, whose father worked the mines during the years the union made the gains it's now struggling to keep. "We're just trying to hang on." □

Jonathan Gill is a writer based in Charleston, W.Va. Lisa Easterling is a writer based in Huntington, W.Va.

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By Salim Muwakkil

CHICAGO

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IS ONE OF the country's biggest growth industries, and African-American males are the primary raw materials. If present trends continue—and most experts predict they will—there soon will be more African-American men in jails and prisons than in colleges or professional schools.

Randolph Stone often cites that chilling projection to provoke more concern among African-Americans about the toll the criminal justice system is taking in the black community. And Stone should know. As Cook County public defender (PD), he has intimate knowledge of what some blacks derisively call the "just us" system. He's also convinced that new methods must be used to solve the current crisis in the system, including the problem of racial imbalance. But rather than addressing real needs, Stone says that our national leadership seems addicted to an ineffective "lock 'em up" mentality.

"The issue of the '90s for the criminal justice system is not drugs or white-collar crime," Stone explains, "but the plight of the African-American criminal defendant." However, issues concerning the criminal justice system's racial imbalances are seldom raised when the federal government periodically announces its various crackdowns on crime.

For example, Stone says, the heavy law enforcement and incarceration emphasis of President George Bush's new crime plan will have little or no impact on the crisis in the criminal justice system. "As new prisons are built, they will soon be filled beyond capacity," he predicts. "More money spent to incarcerate people simply means less resources devoted to eradicating the sources of crime. Poverty, unemployment and illiteracy will continue to grow and ensure an ample supply of young black men in our criminal courts, jails and prisons."

Defense in depth: As head of the massive Cook County public defender's office, Stone leads the only line of criminal defense for the county's indigent criminal defendants. "As it is in most urban contexts," he says, "80 to 90 percent of all criminal defendants are African-American." Despite those numbers, Stone is the first African-American to hold the Illinois position. The Cook County PD, which handles about 200,000 cases a year, is the nation's third largest public defender office. The office is funded by the county's Board of Commissioners and it employs 468 attorneys and 237 support staff.

The 42-year-old Milwaukee native was picked for the job by Chief Circuit Court Judge Harry Comerford after a nationwide "merit selection" search by an advisory board narrowed down to three candidates out of 90 applicants. His May 1988 appointment followed a series of reports that strongly criticized the public defender's office as a badly managed patronage haven that, because of ineffective leadership and poor training, provided indigent defendants with inadequate representation. The office had also been hit with a racial and sex discrimination suit.

Comerford said he picked Stone—who was the only African-American among the three finalists—because his wide-ranging qualifications indicated he could best meet the challenges facing the beleaguered office. "We were looking for a good lawyer and we were looking for somebody who had an administrative background, and that type of background is relatively hard to come by."

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The 'just us' system is an offense to a defender



Cook County Public Defender Randolph Stone: empathy for the bedeviled.

Comerford told the *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin* at the time of Stone's appointment.

Stone's story is one of those heartening tales of an activist baby boomer who resisted the big chill. In the mid-'60s he was involved in civil rights demonstrations led by Milwaukee's legendary Father Groppi. He later was attracted to the community pro-

grams of the Black Panther Party. Stone served a year in Vietnam as an Army helicopter gunner and returned with his social consciousness intact.

Our social system relegates people to an underground economy and then jails them for making a living in it.

After the Army, Stone continued his political organizing even as he pursued a political science degree at the University of Wisconsin. While working on his master's degree, he found part-time employment with a small law firm that did civil rights litigation, and he was hooked. "They were some very dedicated guys, and I was really impressed by their sense of mission. I also saw the tremendous amount of good they did for people

who normally had little access to quality legal representation." Stone entered law school at the University of Wisconsin in Madison in 1972. He was president of the Black Students Association while there and became involved in a clinic program that provided services for the poor and incarcerated. During the summers he worked for the Milwaukee Legal Services program, another group that helped the poor with legal services.

After graduating law school in 1975, he worked in legal services and criminal defense programs in both Washington, D.C., and Chicago. Stone had settled down to a private practice in Chicago when he was lured away in 1983 to work for Washington, D.C.'s Public Defender Service. He was deputy director of the office when he left for Chicago five years later.

Courtroom apartheid: "Most of my legal career has been representing poor people," he says, "and I think I have a genuine empathy for the people I represent. I realize that if it weren't for a bit of luck here or there, I could well be one of them." That empathy in Stone's approach to the job was, according to one of the studies that criticize the Cook County PD, one of the elements most lacking in that office.

"Think about what the criminal justice system must look like to the African-American criminal defendant, almost all of whom are

indigent," Stone says. "The defendant will probably be brought to the court by a white male law enforcement officer. When he enters the courtroom he will probably see a white judge, a white clerk and a white court reporter."

"The odds are that the prosecutor and the public defender will be white," he notes. "The journalists will probably be white. If there's a jury trial the jury will most likely be white

JUSTICE

also. The victim is probably an African-American. So we have a black victim and defendant being processed, tried and sentenced by mainly white court personnel."

But those stark racial imbalances in the criminal justice system mean little to a community overwhelmed by crime. Too many African-American neighborhoods have been transformed into wastelands by criminal activity and, rather than protest the racial disparities in the system, the embattled residents are clamoring for more effective white protection.

Stone says that while he fully understands this reaction, he believes it is misplaced. "The cry from within our own community to lock up our own youth ignores the root of the problem and only encourages the hysteria," he contends. Stone argues that locking

Spending more money to jail people simply means less money available to eliminate the sources of crime.

up increasing numbers of African-American youth will not put a significant dent in the crime problem, but will cause considerable damage to the African-American future.

The current anti-crime hysteria is being driven by the drug problem, he argues, noting that "we have to get much more creative about how we deal with the issue of drugs." Stone is sympathetic to the proposals of Baltimore Mayor Kurt Schmoke, who urges that drug use be decriminalized. "I agree with Schmoke that the criminal justice system is an inappropriate arena for the fight against drug abuse. It's more a public health and education issue, and I think it could be more effectively approached from that perspective."

Underground economy: Stone says that when talking to kids about drug selling, he's struck by the fact that, after being abandoned by the public school system, they see no other economic alternative. "Would we rather they and their families be homeless?" he asks. "It's tragic how we have set up a social system that virtually handcuffs a whole class of people to the underground economy and then arrests and incarcerates them for making a living in that economy."

Stone is both frustrated and motivated by that kind of institutional injustice. Motivated because as head of what he calls "the largest unified court system in the world," he can actually make a difference in providing access to justice for those most in need. Frustrated because he finds it difficult to understand the perversity of U.S. policymakers. "What could possibly be the priorities of a system that allows schools to have a ratio of 30 to 40 students for every teacher, while our prisons have three inmates for every prison employee?" he asks. □

By Mike Tidwell

WASHINGTON

MANY ARE TEMPTED TO DISMISS AS GRIM humor the rantings of William J. Bennett, the nation's new drug czar, who has gladly dusted off James Watts' armor of right-wing eccentricity and found it a nice fit. But the temptation is dangerous. Czar Bennett is serious. In increasingly hard-line language, Bennett is making clear his belief that stemming the nation's drug problem requires banishing many, if not all, of the nation's 23 million drug users to an archipelago of new prisons and "boot camps."

Bennett's punishment-oriented strategy is already being put to work in Washington, D.C., in what the czar has called an important "test case" for the nation. Responding to soaring drug use and drug-related homicides in the capital, Bennett in April unveiled an \$80 million federal "crime and emergency assistance program" to aid the capital's beleaguered government.

Predictably, the centerpiece of the plan calls for the construction of more federal prisons. The plan also assigns to the District of Columbia extra federal prosecutors, as well as commando-style strike forces and, in a novel use of Pentagon assets, military intelligence analysts to help bust users and dealers.

So far the program has succeeded in increasing the number of drug arrests in Washington, a city that already incarcerates a higher rate of its citizens than any other in the world. But a casual drive through Washington reveals that the capital's 90 open-air drug markets have not decreased in number, although many have moved to other blocks. As one district official put it, "I don't know why the federal government thinks it can stop drugs in the capital when it can't stop drugs from pouring into the country."

Wrong man for the job: Undeterred, Bennett pushes on. And if one accepts his invitation to view the emergency program as a test case, several emerging patterns provide a taste of what to expect when he launches his national anti-drug program in September. Officials in D.C. government and in Congress point to two major problems with the evolving drug policy. First is Bennett's acerbic, archconservative style.

The position of national drug policy director was created by Congress as part of the 1988 Anti-Drug Abuse Act. The drug czar has no direct authority over the myriad federal agencies fighting drugs, but was intended by Congress to be an organizer—someone who would coordinate the disparate policies of government factions whose internecine jealousies have turned interdiction and domestic enforcement into a Keystone Cops theater of the absurd. To orchestrate these forces the czar would require, above all, diplomatic skills—an ability to cajole, persuade and lead.

With his first emergency program in Washington, however, Bennett has already made a mockery of this job requirement by refusing to cooperate with city officials even on a minimal level. In a style local citizens' activist Tom Chortlon likened to that of a "colonial overlord," Bennett openly and regularly berated district officials for their "irresponsible" handling of the drug explosion. Bennett also refused to meet publicly with Marion Barry, who, although he has links to alleged drug dealers, is after all the city's mayor. Worse, although the federal assistance program affects their city and requires their participation for success, not a single

Bennett's lore on drugs: the myth of 'lock 'em up and throw away the keys'

district official was extensively briefed about the program before its inception. More humiliating, none was invited to join Bennett in unveiling the program at an April press conference.

Bennett's bully pulpit approach quickly backfired when, three weeks after he announced the program, two groups of drug officials—one city and one federal—raided the same crack house on the same day. The city cops went first, evicting 16 residents and boarding up the building. An hour later, representatives of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF)—working under Bennett's plan and unaware of the city's raid—stormed the building. They laboriously tore down plywood nailed to the doors, ripped off boards set across windows and ignored freshly attached "no trespassing" signs. Wearing bulletproof vests and clutching assault rifles, they burst into an empty building.

The bungled raid left many critics wondering how Bennett, who has found it impossible to cooperate with a comparatively small city government, can coordinate the policies of the FBI, BATF, Drug Enforcement Agency, Customs Service, Coast Guard, Justice Department and 80 congressional panels—all with thumbs in the drug enforcement pie.

Crime and punishment: The second and more disturbing flaw in Bennett's approach, according to many observers, is his steadfast belief in punishment as the most important element of the drug fight. Under the Reagan administration the federal government spent an unprecedented \$20 billion on drug enforcement, while at the same time cocaine consumption doubled and the wholesale price dropped 60 percent. As a result, most politicians and criminal justice experts expected some new thinking and creativity from the new drug boss.

They were disappointed. Bennett is blunt in stating his view of how to deter drugs and drug-related violence. The country needs

The new drug czar thinks the best way to stem narcotics is to "exact a price" from users and dealers by putting them in prison. But many experts fear taxpayers will pay the real price for such strategy, while drug use and drug-related crime rage on.

"more prisons, more jails, more judges to put [drug offenders] away," he said recently on CBS News' *Face the Nation*. He also told *National Review*: "I'm not a person who says that the first purpose of punishment is rehabilitation. The first purpose is moral, to exact a price for transgressing the rights of others."

Hence, new prisons stand at the center of Bennett's Washington "test case" program. In truth, however, Washington has already



been a test case of whether high rates of arrest and incarceration can stem violent street crime.

According to Jerome G. Miller, co-founder of the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives, approximately 46,000 drug arrests have been made in Washington in the past 18 months. On an average day, 26,000 residents are under correctional supervision. This in a city with a population of only 620,000. For black men, at least half of those younger than 35 have been or will be imprisoned or jailed at some time in their lives.

Yet even with such incarceration rates, the drug-related street violence rages on in Washington. A seemingly inexhaustible, and increasingly aggressive, population of younger sellers and buyers replaces other offenders virtually the moment they are handcuffed and led away. Nonetheless, czar Bennett pushes his tired imprisonment argument. With the backing of President Bush, Bennett is now ready to apply his ideas to the entire country. In addition to calling for weakening of the exclusionary rule (which prohibits illegally obtained evidence from being used in a trial), limiting habeas corpus (which protects people from being held without charge) and mandating the death penalty for drug-related murders, Bush's anti-crime plan unveiled in May asks Congress for \$1.7 billion to allow the federal government to dramatically expand its prison population by 24,000 inmates.

And understand, Bennett isn't just after dealers and kingpins. His ambitious instinct for harsh crackdown has put users in his cross hairs—all 23 million of them, if it comes to that. For this he is giving serious

consideration to establishing boot camps across the country where first-time drug offenders would undergo paramilitary training and anti-drug therapy. The notion has drawn sharp criticism from civil liberties lawyers who point out the plan's impracticality and dubious constitutionality.

The price of war: If his Washington plan is any indication, Bennett will fill the new prisons and boot camps by sending more drug agents and strike forces into urban neighborhoods. Ironically, interviews with street dealers and users in Washington reveal that such strikes actually increase the likelihood of violence. Enforcement officials admit that the record homicide rate in the capital is directly linked to turf wars between groups of dealers. And each time officers close down a street corner or block, the enormous volume and demand for drugs sends new dealers to the next closest block, invading the turf of other drug groups. This constant reshuffling and realignment of drug areas inevitably fuels feuds and violence.

District officers also concede that by pushing drug operations from neighborhood to neighborhood, they are helping crack make its way through the district, exposing new potential users. Three years ago, for example, the D.C. Coalition for the Homeless chose a drug-free street for its halfway house for recovering addicts. A year later crack houses sprang up all around the facility after police shut down drug activity a block away. Now the struggling ex-users at the coalition house are repeatedly asked to buy crack every time they walk to the bus stop.

Despite the apparent ineffectiveness of the

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with management we got new work coming in." But, he insists, "we will not participate in 'whipsawing.' We will not go after work that belongs to other UAW members."

Kelly Sparks, president of the Racine, Wis., Case farm implements local, said, "People in the shops say, 'Goddamn, if they listen to me they could do it better.' Now we can sit in the meetings and voice our ideas." But the local set strict standards: no workers can be forced to participate, and the discussions will not be used to eliminate jobs or to speed up work. In the first few months, workers were able to eliminate foremen from a few work areas.

At the Wentzville, Mo., GM assembly plant, where Peter Downs is the union's recording secretary, hundreds of workers now join in mass alternative union meetings in the plant rather than attend their work team meetings. Under terms of the 1987 GM contract, union officials meet with management to implement the company's business plan and are expected to keep their discussions confidential.

The result in his plant, Downs argues, is that local union leaders agreed to a 9.5 percent annual reduction in labor costs for three years. Members did not vote on that agreement, even though, Downs argues, it will mean job cuts and speed-ups. "The shop chairman says we can't file grievances. It's not 'competitive.' People get hurt or thrown out on sick leave. People with grievances on job overloads are thrown out, and the shop committee does nothing. Our experience in Wentzville is that so-called economic

democracy schemes have resulted in a harsher dictatorship by management. We lost the shop committee and some officers because they've become junior partners in management."

Out of joint? Insiders say the UAW has never systematically evaluated the joint programs. There are some cases where cooperation seemed to save jobs or improve working conditions at little cost to workers. But the state of the economy, the overseas manufacturing strategies of the Big Three automakers and corporate design decisions easily swamp most worker initiatives. The union still has little say about major investment decisions, which is the more ambitious, hard-to-achieve kind of economic democracy some New Directions leaders want.

Tucker, Region 5 director until defeated at the convention, argues that the UAW should bargain as a whole with GM or other companies over reductions in their capacity rather than allow pressures on individual locals. And if the union wants workplace democracy, "have works councils and let the workers vote [on decisions]," he said. "The plants have become two-tier, the elites [with patronage jobs and a limited voice] and workers." Tucker criticizes not the joint programs as such but rather the "culture of jointness" that he says subordinates the union—and especially rank-and-file workers—within the corporate agenda.

The opposition never appeared to win more than about 15 percent of the delegates for their minority reports on economic democracy, a resolution to mandate more organizing staff or the perennial proposal to have direct referendum voting for top officials. There was spirited, attentive debate,

but the conclusions were foregone. Administration caucus supporters often attacked dissidents as enemies of the union, but the vigorous opposition ultimately makes the UAW more democratic and responsive. However, if the administration caucus makes dissidents' legitimate questions about union strategy seem disloyal, argues Association for Union Democracy observer Gordon Haskell, it will be much harder for anyone to raise questions and thus puts leaders out of touch.

In reaction to the strength of New Directions, the largest dissident force in many decades, UAW leaders are trying both to strengthen their caucus and to comprehend the discontent. For example, when Detroit area New Directions regional director candidate Don Douglas took an early lead in elections this spring, UAW Vice President Marc Stepp hurriedly called a meeting of all Chrysler local leaders—without any union staff present to inhibit them.

Rank and file: In anticipation of tough battles for local elections next spring, the administration caucus "is going to try to put working caucuses into local unions," UAW spokesman Peter Laarman said. "Bieber has made it clear he can't protect [local officials] if they don't have a program or let these joint programs go wrong." This apparently reverses the recent practice of permitting the churning of officers at lower ranks as a safety valve for rank-and-file discontent.

From the beginning the UAW leadership overreacted to Tucker's challenge. First they used tactics the courts found illegal to defeat him. This was apparently done out of loyalty to the incumbent regional director, who was, by their own private admission, incompetent and unpopular, and also because of the leadership's desire to enforce caucus rules as if they were rules of the union. When Tucker was finally elected, he was denied staff cooperation and many of the normal powers of director. Tucker says his pledge to cooperate with Bieber on most matters but to disagree on certain issues was simply rebuffed. Both Tucker and Douglas may challenge their election defeats, charging illegal actions in specific locals and systematic abuse of union resources on behalf of their opponents (see *In These Times*, June 7).

New Directions will continue despite its defeats. Some, like Tucker, will go on arguing for a loose "provisional organizing committee" and grass-roots initiative; others will push for a more formal organization. The downturn in auto sales, together with contract talks next year, could spark more internal dissent. "Wait 'til next convention," said delegate Gifford, who voted with the administration. "[The leaders] will have their hands full. These people [in New Directions] are trying to say something. We're scared. They've got to listen to this."

As Jordan advised, "democracy is not an easy call," but within the union—as much as in the polity and the workplace—there's no better alternative.

Bennett

Continued from page 9

street-crackdown-and-imprisonment approach that Bennett now calls for in greater doses, no one is arguing the government should discontinue its drug efforts altogether. Indeed, with cocaine-related deaths and illnesses rocketing to 40,000 last year and a growing number of inner-city babies now born addicted to drugs, the situation screams out for a solution.

Adding urgency to the crisis is the nationwide proliferation of crimes by users looking for money to support their habits. Offenses include everything from muggings to burglaries to thefts of recyclable aluminum street guardrails and signs.

Yet while creating almost 1,000 new prison and jail beds for the district, Bennett's emergency program will increase beds for drug treatment by only 300. Moreover, new funds for drug education in Washington schools represent barely 1 percent of the total package. Sen. Joseph Biden (D-DE) and others in Congress are critical of Bennett's approach to date, claiming he is not following the spirit of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, which emphasizes treatment and education as a major component of the war on drugs.

Fighting crime by redefining it: Also, as border interdiction fails and drug violence worsens, a growing number of public officials and academics are taking interest in another alternative to Bennett's reliance on more stringent enforcement: legalization. At a conference in Washington earlier this month to debate the issue, Baltimore Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke, who has pushed the legalization debate to the national forefront, spoke for many citizens frustrated with the drug situation and skeptical of the Bush administration's evolving hard line.

"We must ask ourselves three questions," Schmoke said. "Have we won the war on drugs? Are we winning the war on drugs? Will more of the same do any good? If you can't answer yes to any of these, then we must keep our minds open about legalization."

For his part, Bennett concedes that legalization would probably eliminate drug-related street wars. But, he contends, it would also lead to increased use. More important than these points, however, is his main belief that the first responsibility of government is to hold the moral line. Doing drugs is immoral. All those who use drugs must be punished. End debate. No legalization.

The stance comes as little surprise to most observers. What else would one expect from a man who, as secretary of education, stridently opposed most forms of sex education in schools and spent most of his time haranguing underpaid, under-equipped teachers on the power of discipline to cure the nation's education woes?

If Bennett succeeds with his national drug plan, America may well find itself a quasi-police state with millions of people behind bars, millions doing push-ups in paramilitary camps and millions still dying slowly of drug use in the streets. If he fails, the country will have lost billions of dollars and years of wasted time in the struggle against drugs.

One thing is certain though. After Bennett, the law-and-order faithful will have tried just about everything in their arsenal and the nation may finally be able to get on with solutions that work.

Mike Tidwell lives and writes in Washington, D.C. He has just completed a book about Africa entitled *Paradise of Paradox*.

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By Diana Johnstone

DURING HIS RECENT TRIUMPHANT TOUR OF West Germany, Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachov told his happy hosts that the postwar period was now over in Europe. This was reflected in the European Parliamentary elections held in the 12 member countries of the European Community (EC) in mid-June. The election results confirmed the decline of the two poles of Cold War politics, the pro-Soviet Communists and the pro-American "center."

Especially in France, the "center" has meant the non-descript, pro-American bourgeois political forces whose timidity was justified by the trauma of World War II and fear of the ideological "extremes" blamed for bringing it about. The "center" was usually wherever the Americans wanted it to be.

In Britain and France, attempts to revive the colorless "center" have been shoved aside by the emergence of a totally original new political "center," the Greens. They proclaim that they are "neither right nor left," but, unlike the center, they are political upstarts full of radical new ideas. The Greens are Europe's first post-postwar political invention, symptomatic of recovered self-confidence.

Maggie of Troy: Another sign of loss of U.S. influence was the debacle of its self-appointed Trojan Horse in the European Community, Margaret Thatcher. Europe rejoiced to see her soundly defeated in Britain itself by Labour and the Greens and abandoned even by fellow Conservative Party leaders.

Thatcher's effort to bully the West Germans on the NATO modernization issue provided the final touch to her image as the woman Western Europe loves to hate. (She is more popular in Poland.) Thatcher comes close to supplying the common enemy needed to unite the EC countries, in the absence of convincing goblins in the Kremlin. Her defeat at the polls at home was quickly followed by her retreat at the meeting of EC leaders in Madrid, where she was forced to give ground on her adamant opposition to a common currency and central bank for the community.

The negative side of European self-assertion is the emergence of a nationalist right. In Britain, an independent far right may have to wait for Thatcher to vacate the terrain. In France and the Federal Republic of Germany, sizable minorities voted for Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front or Franz Schönhuber's Republicans, playing on contemporary grievances, especially resentment against immigrant populations.

The EC itself was rarely the issue. Acceptance of the EC seems general but lukewarm. Abstention was relatively high in most countries. Just how far away a politically united "Europe" really is showed up in the fact that every country ran its election as a test of its own political forces, with scant attention to the elections of the others.

Following are results from the four biggest countries, each with 81 of the European Parliament's 518 seats:

Britain: At 36.4 percent, participation was the lowest of the 12. Thatcher's aggressive attitude was attacked by members of her own Conservative Party who see Britain's economic interests tied up with Europe's. Her predecessor Edward Heath condemned



Britain's Thatcher and Germany's Kohl: out in the cold on the Cold War.

Red and white fade to green in EC elections

her "catastrophic" campaign. The Conservatives lost 19 seats. The big news was the emergence out of nowhere of a Green vote equaling 15 percent of the total—the largest Green vote in Europe. But because of the winner-take-all district electoral system, the British Greens won not a single seat alongside their European colleagues. The *New Statesman* said the scandal showed the "primitive" nature of British democracy. Greens plan to go to the International Court in the Hague to oblige Britain to bring its European election system into line with the proportional systems of other EC members.

Labour's victory had both domestic and European impact. Having won more than 40 percent of the vote, compared to 34 percent for the Conservatives, Neil Kinnock could hope to lead Labour to victory in the next national elections. Labour's 13 new seats gave the Socialist group in Brussels its biggest boost.

France: Despite unrelenting pro-"Europe" indoctrination by the media, abstention broke French records at 51 percent and rose to 68 percent for voters under age 24. While proclaiming their passion for a united Europe, four French TV stations devoted a whole evening to the French election results with scarcely a glance at what happened in the other countries.

Results were mediocre for the main lists. The united conservative coalition headed by former President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and supported by longtime rival Jacques Chirac had to trumpet victory with just under 30 percent, while the Socialists did still worse. His mere 23.5 percent did nothing to advance the career prospects of Mitterrand's favorite heir apparent, Laurent Fabius, who led the Socialist list. A surprisingly large percentage of French voters chose outsiders.

Le Pen's far-right list, "Europe et Patrie," came in third with 11.8 percent. Hinting at dark "cosmopolitan" designs "that remain to be elucidated" behind the current version of

Europe, Le Pen called for a union of anti-socialist forces.

The French Greens, Les Verts, won 10.66 percent and nine seats, thus supplanting the German Grünen as the largest Green contingent in the European Parliament.

The results showed that friendly media are not enough to win an election. Otherwise former European Parliament President Simone

The rising green tide is a self-confident Europe's first postwar political invention.

Veil's list of "renovating centrists" would have done much better than its 8.4 percent and its seven seats. Her poor showing marked the failure of the strategy to give Mitterrand's Socialist Party a "centrist" coalition partner to its right. On election night Veil consoled herself that without her list, "the Greens would have won even more."

Veil, Fabius and Giscard all ran almost indistinguishable campaigns echoing official enthusiasm about "Europe" as "the future." But some French voters, if they did not go fishing on election day, were looking resolutely toward the past. The list called "Hunting, Fishing and Tradition" came close to the 5 percent needed to win seats in France. Predominantly male rural voters went to the polls to keep Brussels' regulations from interfering with their cherished slaughter of migratory birds and other wildlife. The list was a reactionary counter to the Greens by nature lovers of a different temperament.

The election confirmed the drastic decline of the Communist left in France. The French Communist Party and its Trotskyist critics together got only 8 percent. The far left is

close to extinction in France. Its veterans are knocking at the door of the Greens, but they won't let the far left in. Les Verts leader Antoine Waechter does not want to contaminate French Greens with the Marxism he detects, and disapproves of, among the German Grünen.

The established French political class has made a quick switch from dismissing Les Verts as absurd and ignorant fanatics to pointing out how much nicer they are than the horrid German version, in the obvious hope that the French Greens can at least serve to hobble the German ones in Brussels.

Germany: Here nobody was rejoicing except Franz Schönhuber's rightist Republicans, who won six seats with 7 percent of the vote. It was the Republicans who profited from the drop in the Christian Democratic vote (37.8 percent) rather than the Social

EUROPE

Democrats and the Greens, who remained stable with 37.3 percent and 8.4 percent respectively. The Free Democratic Party (FDP) squeaked back over the 5 percent hurdle (which it had missed in 1984), thanks to a show of support for FDP Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher. At the end of the Gorbachov visit, a last-minute appeal to "strengthen Genscher" was pasted on FDP posters.

If the same voting patterns were to prevail in next year's national elections, the arithmetic shows no "Red-Green," nor indeed any other two-party coalition—except for a "grand coalition" between the Social Democrats and Christian Democrats. Neither party can campaign on such a prospect, but it happened in 1966 and could happen again. The need to "block the far right" would provide a welcome excuse to the right wing of the Social Democrats for joining with the Christian Democrats instead of the Greens.

Italy: Italians love Europe and always vote. The national political message was an overall majority for the left. The big gains were made by Bettino Craxi's Socialist Party, although with 14.8 percent he continues to lag too far behind the Italian Communist Party's (PCI) 27.6 percent to deal from a Mitterrand-like position of strength to create a left union with the Communists (as they still call themselves, out of nostalgia). The PCI wants to leave the Communist group and eventually join the Socialist group in the European Parliament. Italy's proportional system enabled Italian Greens to win five seats, even though they were split in two rival lists that together got 6.2 percent of the vote. The "Anti-Prohibitionist League," which campaigned for the legalization of drugs, won a seat for its leader, Marco Taradash. One of its arguments is that legalization is necessary to combat the horrific expansion of the Mafia.

Left out no longer: For the first time, the left has a majority in the European Parliament, if the 182 Socialists from 12 countries can actually function as a coalition with Communists, Greens and assorted "Rainbow" mavericks. Europe remains much too diverse and divided to constitute the "fortress" dreaded by some alarmists. The Green vote is particularly appropriate for the European Parliament, whose powers are limited and unclear to voters. Pressing for environmental regulation is one thing the European Parliament can actually do. □

Chicago's gays and lesbians make their IMPACT political



CHICAGO

RON SABLE IS THIS CITY'S LEADING GAY CITIZEN-politician. A physician at Chicago's giant public hospital, Cook County General, Sable entered the political arena in 1987 when he ran for alderman against the machine incumbent in Chicago's 44th Ward on the North Side. In that election, in which Harold Washington won re-election to a second term as Chicago's first black mayor, Sable surprised party regulars and many others by coming within 1,600 votes of winning on his first try for public office.

After the '87 election, Sable and a group of his supporters organized IMPACT, a Chicago-based gay and lesbian political action committee. In the following interview Sable talks about IMPACT's activities, as well as his experience in running for office and his views on gay and lesbian political activity.

In March IMPACT held its second annual dinner, which was attended by 500 people, including three mayoral candidates, several alderman and a few state legislators. This was a very impressive turnout, especially for a political action committee in its second year and with relatively little money in the till.

True, but it was not just the money. IMPACT was created because we realized that in electoral politics two things matter, money and a voting constituency. We raised \$40,000 at our first dinner last year and \$70,000 this year. We gave money to candidates, but we also underwrote a gay and lesbian registration drive that registered 18,000 new supportive voters.

Were these all gay voters?

We assume they were largely supportive, and we know it really doesn't matter what these people's sexual orientation is. In my ward, during the election, we did a poll and found that three-quarters of those polled knew someone who was gay and 80 percent supported the Human Rights Ordinance. So the 44th Ward, while it varies from one precinct to another, is a largely sympathetic community.

These new voters, and our ability to mobilize them, in my view, significantly influenced the way the political community at large now looks at Chicago's gay and lesbian community. One result was that every mayoral candidate was on board for the Human Rights Ordinance that passed last year. They all made strenuous efforts to demonstrate their support, and they delivered votes in the council. That the Human Rights Ordinance passed in the heat of a mayoral campaign would have been unthinkable only two years ago. And these politicians also have made appearances in the community—and, of course, they showed up for the dinner.

With the exception of a few places like San Francisco, the gay community has not seemed to be actively involved in politics. Has this also been true in Chicago?

Prior to Harold Washington's first run for mayor I had never participated in electoral campaigns, and in general, gay participation in Chicago's electoral arena had been extremely limited. The few people involved before that were Democratic machine-oriented, and the machine's approach to gays was the same as to other constituencies—a sort of plantation politics, a you-vote-for-us-and-we'll-take-care-of-you sort of thing.

Harold [Washington] changed that in a

dramatic way. He had supported gay rights for years, and when he was elected he immediately established liaison with the community and appointed an official committee on gay and lesbian issues that had status in his administration. He appeared at events—he was, for example, the first sitting mayor to appear at a gay and lesbian pride rally—and established a climate of openness, not just for the gay and lesbian community but for all communities. That made people see the opportunities that were there.

In fact, the climate Washington established set the tone for my campaign. I would not have considered doing what I did under any previous administration. My campaign was a first in Chicago—an openly gay politician campaigning on a platform of gay and lesbian rights, as well as accountability and popular participation. We raised \$140,000, had hundreds and hundreds of volunteers, had the best-run campaign in the city. And we almost won—which was a shock to everybody, including the opposition.

them, and we're no different.

But we do have a unique experience in that we are a tremendously diverse community. We are literally everywhere—men and women, old and young, every race, all classes. There tends to be a focus on the most visible group—white gay men, who have more options to be out. That's an important part of the community, but it's only one part.

When the community is united, our diversity can be a great strength, but it can be a weakness as well. And a recognition of that diversity is part of the reason for IMPACT being non-partisan. I don't know what percentage of our donor base would consider themselves Republican, but it's not small. But even those people who are Republicans recognize—all except the most ideological—how shabby the Republican Party has been in every way to gays and lesbians. So, while they might in many other ways in their lives identify as Republicans, they will sanction contributions and support for people who are Democrats or independents.

them. That's what the Human Rights Ordinance effort was all about. Our position is strengthened when we can show other people that they have an interest in this as well.

The idea of "special interests," is, I think, wrong. We all have an interest in equity and justice. When any segment of society is trampled on or abused, we're all threatened. So that when the Human Rights Ordinance was passed it extended protections not only to gays and lesbians, but also to the disabled and to seniors and people with bad military discharges. Many people had a stake in this. So the civil rights agenda is essentially to be treated like everyone else. As Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) has said, there's nothing special about gay and lesbian rights. They're the rights everyone wants and deserves.

Obviously, AIDS is a most urgent problem, and has profoundly affected the gay and lesbian community. We insist on an effective and humane approach to this public health problem. Groups like Act-Up have been important in pointing up official callousness

That's a much more difficult issue to win public support for.

Yes, that's kind of the cutting edge these days at the public policy level. A number of communities have enacted domestic partnership legislation or have begun to grapple with it. In San Francisco, Supervisor Harry Britt just got a domestic partnership ordinance through the Board of Supervisors. It may be the model for us all. The problem in writing these is in defining what a relationship is. For heterosexuals, it's simply a matter of being legally married. Outside of that, definition is a major problem.

Now let's talk about the Democratic Party. In running for alderman in the 44th Ward I was interested in capturing power. And in this community, in this city at this time, you operate in a two-party system—or, more accurately, in Chicago, in a one-party system.

Yes, but we do have a two-party system in Chicago. It's sort of the kind they have in the Soviet Union. They're both in the Democratic Party. There's the machine and the independents. Timothy Evans—who ran against Richard Daley in April on the Harold Washington Party ticket—formalized that. But it doesn't mean that Evans is not still a Democrat.

Right. A real third party just doesn't seem to make any sense locally. We have this decades-long tradition of the people we want to appeal to thinking within the two-party system, and most of those I want to appeal to think of themselves as Democrats. The aldermanic races are technically non-partisan, but I ran as a delegate to the Democratic convention and went to it as a Democrat. I feel that it's the responsibility of those of us who don't like the direction of the party to out-organize the people now in control. To do what we can do and move it in our direction, rather than set up something separate.

I also think it has to start at the local level. I would like to see someone who shares my vision be the ward committeeman in our ward because he or she could do a great deal in terms of registering voters and getting people to participate in a process that would be lively and engaging and empowering. But you don't have that with the machine because that's not its purpose. In this ward, when I'm the alderman, I want a committeeman who will share our goals and purpose.

When you're the alderman there won't be any trouble electing the committeeman. Tell me what you think the connection is between being on the left and your gay politics.

I had been involved in progressive causes before I came out. The understanding of the links between people and the breadth of vision has informed the way I go about doing gay and lesbian politics. It's building coalitions. It's making connections. It's being inclusive rather than exclusive. It's really understanding the diversity of the gay and lesbian community and appreciating that while I'm white, not everybody is, and while I'm privileged, not everybody is, and thinking about those people who are a part of my community but are not often represented.

It seems that all the major gay political figures have been on the left. Harvey Milk, Harry Britt, you, David Skondras, Karen Clark, Barney Frank.

That's certainly true. They're all Democrats and on the left of the party. A gay politics—like women's politics or union politics or black or Hispanic politics—gets its power from the community. It does not come from the establishment. And it is not defending the establishment. □

By James Weinstein

Especially the opposition.

Yes, they won't be caught by surprise again.

That campaign tremendously fueled people's notions about the possibilities in electoral action. One result was effective activity in support of the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in 1987. Some of the key organizers were people who came out of my campaign. They helped bring some 5,000 people from Chicago to the largest national civil rights march in history. Another was the Names Project, which brought the AIDS quilt to Chicago. That huge organizing effort involved close to 1,000 people. Other dramatic changes in the last two years have included open participation in the Dukakis and mayoral campaigns last year and this year.

This is not the only route to accomplishing one's goals, but it is an important one that many communities and constituencies have been moving along over the last decade. The acknowledgment by politicians that they need to pay attention to this community—a dramatic change that occurred in a mere two years—proves that. For the gay and lesbian community, as an invisible minority, achieving electoral office is particularly important because it gives a kind of concrete power. It gives status that must be acknowledged by other people in positions of power. It commands public respect. There's nobody who can speak for you as you can speak for yourself. At this time no other minority group would accept someone other than one of their own speaking for them or representing

The DEMOCRATS:

Planning a party

Did you have much support from Republicans when you ran?

Oh, absolutely. And also for IMPACT.

Do these people find a conflict between your support of the gay community and of gay rights and your other progressive or left positions?

There are only a few who found it such a contradiction that they wouldn't support me, or who even made an issue of it. I was attacked by one person after the campaign who said publicly that the reason I lost was that I talked so much about Nicaragua. But Nicaragua never came up once in the campaign, and in any case our ward overwhelmingly opposes U.S. intervention in Nicaragua.

You talk about "our issues." What do you think are the appropriate issues for a gay politics? What issues are specifically gay?

In half the states in this country—Georgia, for example—there are still sodomy laws, and our legality itself is still an issue. In states where legality is established, the next step is the winning of equity, of civil rights protections that everyone else takes for granted in their everyday lives and assumes that these protections are there in the Constitution for

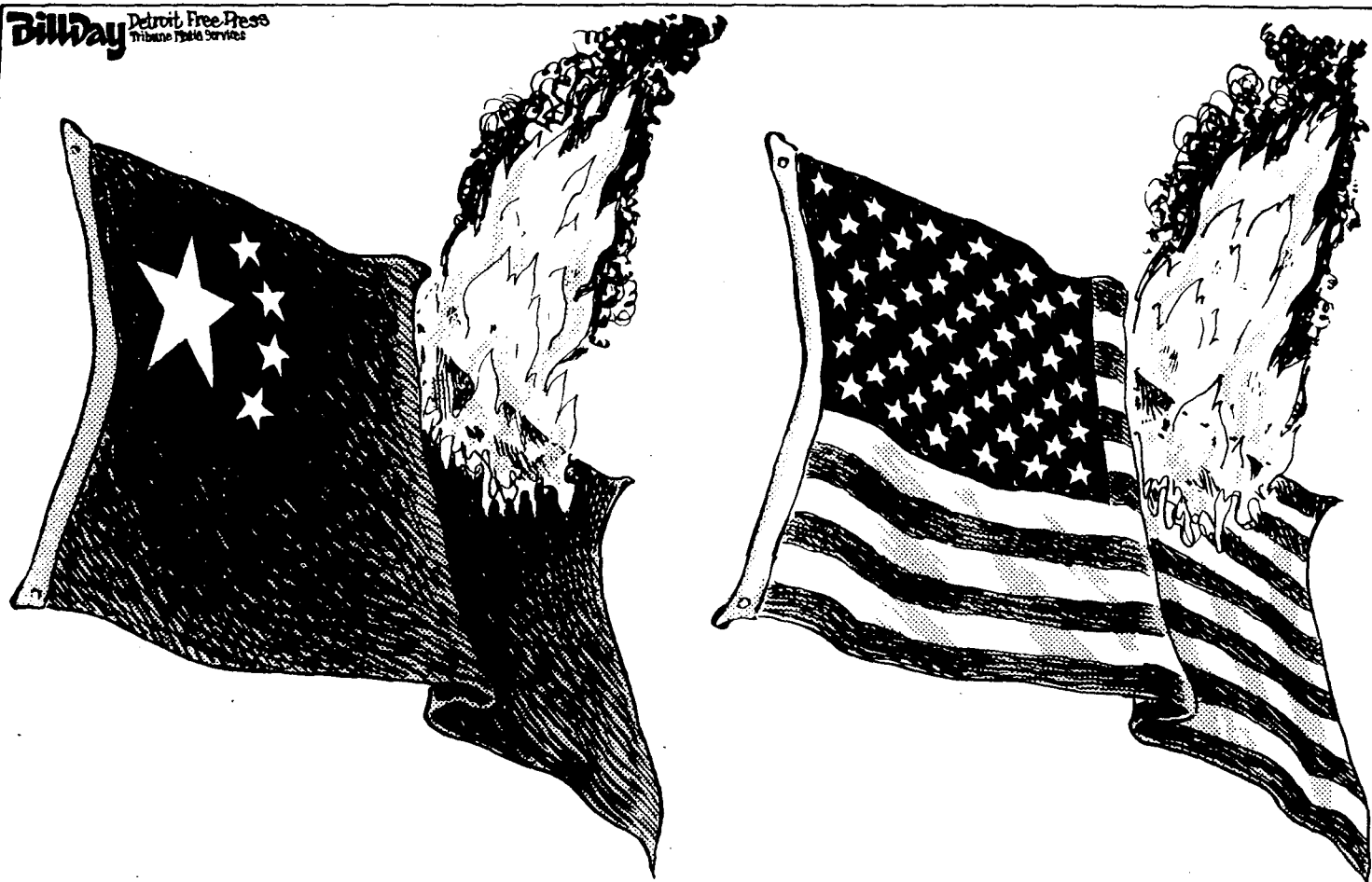
and neglect. Other segments of the community continue to develop lobbying skills at the local and federal level.

But there are other issues, too—bias-related crime that is directed at people because they are gay or are perceived to be gay. This includes both abuse at the hands of citizens and abuse at the hands of the police. There are projects in Chicago and elsewhere now collecting data and investigating complaints about such abuse. This is an area in which we can make connections with women concerned about rape and sexual harassment by the police or by the courts. Racial minorities have also had lifetimes of negative experience at the hands of police authority. The same people who are painting swastikas on synagogues one night are out fag-bashing the next. So these are not experiences that are unique to us and making the connections is very important.

Then there is the whole area of domestic partnership—all the things that have to do with gay and lesbian families. Child custody, all the parenting options—foster parenting, adoption. This revolves around the restrictions placed on those identified as gay or lesbian that are still sanctioned by the courts. And then the recognition of gay and lesbian relationships as legitimate even though they cannot be sanctioned legally or formally, and gaining benefits, like health insurance, that accrue to people who have heterosexual relationships that are sanctioned by law.

EDITORIAL

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IN WHICH COUNTRY WOULD YOU BE FREE
FOR BURNING A FLAG?

Court honors the flag, ignites a burning Bush

What is more important, the flag or the principles it is supposed to represent? It's a simple question, and one would have thought that even the current Supreme Court, loaded as it is with Reagan-appointed hypocrites, would have had an easy time deciding it. Yet a bare 5-4 majority upheld the primacy of free political speech over jingoism and rabble-rousing. In his majority opinion, Justice William J. Brennan argued that punishing desecration of the flag would not honor it, but only "dilute the freedom that this cherished emblem represents." And to his credit, Reagan's last appointee to the Court, Justice Anthony M. Kennedy, agreed. "The hard fact is," he wrote, "that sometimes we must make decisions we do not like. We make them because they're right in the sense that the law and the Constitution, as we see them, compel the result."

Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, on the other hand, has not yet gotten the meaning of political freedom. In his dissenting opinion he wrote that "surely one of the high purposes of a democratic society is to legislate against conduct that is regarded as evil and profoundly offensive to the majority of people—whether it be murder, embezzlement, pollution or flag burning." The logical flaw here is glaring. Murder, embezzlement and pollution are not forms of political expression. Flag burning is.

Making distinctions: One of the duties of the legislative branch of government is to define which anti-social acts are criminal. But the Bill of Rights was included in the Constitution to prevent the passions of any given moment from carrying this duty into the realm of free expression, especially in the political arena. One who believes in the strict interpretation of the Constitution should be especially clear on this question, as, indeed, two Reagan appointees—Kennedy and Antonin Scalia—were. And anyone should be able to see the difference between murder, embezzlement and polluting, on the one hand, and political expression, on the other.

The wisdom of flag burning as a form of political expression is another matter. Chief Justice Rehnquist is undoubtedly correct in saying that it is profoundly offensive to the majority of Americans,

as it should be. For the vast majority of Americans, the flag symbolizes rights that we as a people have won through collective struggles over the last 200 years—and that we are all entitled to exercise and enjoy. To them flag burning is incomprehensible, except as an attack on our democratic rights. But it is hardly a threat to our form of government. When the flag is burned by crazies on the left, as was the case here, it serves only further to isolate them from the American people.

Stars and hypes: The men in the White House—the ones who brought us Willie Horton and the brouhaha over the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag—know all this. Now they smell another opportunity for demagogic diversion. So they have prodded President Bush from his midsummer languor to announce that he finally has found something really important to get excited about. Forget the four recent Supreme Court decisions reversing civil rights gains of the past 25 years. Ignore the implications of the pandemic corruption in his esteemed predecessor's Department of Housing and Urban Development. Overlook the gross discrepancies in administration response to alleged human rights violations in Nicaragua and the slaughter of pro-democracy advocates in China. Wave the flag. Intimidate the Democrats. Try to start a stampede for a new constitutional amendment that would outlaw desecration of our common symbol, while diverting attention from the substantive desecrations of our democracy.

To make intentions clear, Bush's initiative was launched with a dual announcement. "Flag burning is wrong," the President informed us, so there will be a push to amend the Constitution in order to protect it. And he is "strongly committed" to equal opportunity for all Americans, but there will be no legislative action to revise the Supreme Court's ruling on civil rights. As Rev. Jesse Jackson observed after hearing the administration's rationale for no action on civil rights, Bush is placing a higher priority on protecting the flag than on the rights it represents.

But then, there's nothing new here. The president is merely following precedent. And the Democratic leadership in Congress, which is trying to soft-pedal the issue—hoping it will go away, as it probably will—are also playing their role. Instead of challenging the administration, they're wimping out, allowing Bush to squeeze a bit of political advantage out of his own dishonesty and in the process further weakening their moral and political authority.

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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LETTERS

Filled to the rim— with flim

IT'S INCONCEIVABLE THAT IN THESE TIMES WOULD publish an article about Ruth Messinger filled with mistruths—but there it was in one of your recent issues (June 7). Contrary to Daniel Lazare's presumptions and claims, Ruth Messinger has been the pre-eminent proponent of democratic socialist politics who has transformed these politics into everyday, practical politics. Just when she is about to gain expanded national prominence by becoming Manhattan Borough president—and bring our political vision to a wider audience—*In These Times* decides to publish an article filled with misrepresentations about Ruth's history and philosophy. There is no one who has better translated our moral vision of democratic socialism into the nitty-gritty everyday necessities of city government. She deserves all of our support.

Jo-Ann Mort
Member, National Executive Committee
Democratic Socialists of America

Casually misinformed

HOW WOULD AN *IN THESE TIMES* MEDIA CRITIC judge a news article that had no corroborating or attributed sources, contained numerous factual errors and whose author hadn't spoken to his subject for over three months?

While we in New York have come to expect this kind of shoddy reporting in some of our sensational tabloids, we were shocked to find it in *In These Times*.

Dan Lazare's piece on New York City Council Member Ruth Messinger (*ITT*, June 7) presented a grossly distorted view of Messinger's extraordinarily successful campaign for Manhattan Borough president.

If Lazare had attended any of Messinger's volunteer meetings, the Latinos for Messinger kickoff in East Harlem or her recent town meeting in Harlem, he would have seen very clearly that she's been more than able to reach beyond her "liberal West Side base." (The West Side is actually a remarkably heterogeneous community, which Lazare somehow manages to boil down into a stereotype convenient to his thesis.)

Polling data, information available to Lazare that he either ignored or neglected to seek out, has always shown Messinger handily winning in all of Manhattan's neighborhoods, among blacks, Latinos and whites, and against any of her potential opponents. Her campaign has collected more than \$800,000 from over 8,000 individual contributors. She has attended more than 300 house parties in neighborhoods throughout the city. If that's not successfully expanding a base, what is?

Lazare's depiction of David Dinkins as the city clerk is disrespectful and misleading. While Dinkins served as city clerk for some 12 years, he has been a distinguished Manhattan Borough president for the last four years, which is how he has become the leading contender for mayor. Moreover, there has been nothing "cool" about his relations with Messinger. His early commitment not to endorse anyone in the race to succeed him and his public declarations that the job should not be a "black seat" were both quite helpful in advancing her position.

Lazare's assertion that Messinger's career was sidelined by her "two" (actually three) children is both sexist and incorrect. This notion would come as a great surprise to these children—now adults—since their mother worked on various professional social work and community empowerment projects throughout their infancies and childhoods. The suggestion that children are somehow debilitating is odious.

While Messinger continues to be an advocate for school decentralization, it is ludicrous to suggest that she "staked her career" on the issue.

There are other factual errors and misleading impressions.

Messinger was hardly surprised by the changing nature of the office she is running for. The borough presidency, the role of which is currently being redefined by New York City's Charter Revision Committee, will be a new office. This change in the structure of New York City government is one Messinger has long been lobbying for as co-chair of Citizens for Charter Change (CCC). CCC is a broad-based citizens group that Messinger's co-chairs with Rep. Major Owens (D-NY) and Stanley Hill of District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

As a new office, the borough presidency's powers in large part will be defined by its occupants. Given the great many things Ruth Messinger has been able to accomplish as a city council member with a staff of six, her tenure as borough president with a staff of more than 100 holds great promise.

Even if we grant Lazare his narrow and literal view of political process, the new borough presidency will still be a very powerful post—by virtue of its formal input into land use, its substantial appointment power and its likely role in the budget process.

Combining a thorough grass-roots organizing effort with political sophistication, Messinger's candidacy is a success story that progressives around the country should be celebrating and emulating, not denigrating with casual misinformation. Her campaign has brought New Yorkers together. In what is an increasingly polarized atmosphere, her increasing stature throughout the city is a hopeful development. Lazare and *In These Times* owe their readers the full story. We invite you to stick around for the next four years to see just how "far removed from the reins of power" Messinger's new job will be. We know that her story has just begun.

Jan Pierce
Communications Workers of America
Diane Morales
Manhattan Borough President's Office

Stanley Hill
District Council 37, AFSCME

Don Hazen
Former Publisher, *Mother Jones*

(organizations listed for identification purposes only)

Out of the loop

DANIEL LAZARE'S ARTICLE ON RUTH MESSINGER'S campaign (*ITT*, June 7) consistently misses the point. He seems to feel that she is simply a product of a conventional liberal politics that is out of step with the rest of the city. He dismisses the fact that she is virtually unopposed in her run for Manhattan Borough president by attributing it to uncertainty regarding the power that the office will hold in the future.

Lazare fails to mention that Messinger is a socialist and had to overcome the opposition of the traditional West Side leadership in her initial bids for elective office. In office she has consistently acted as a spokesperson for the powerless and as the leading opponent in the City Council to the policies of the Koch administration. She has overcome consistent red-baiting by the mayor and defeated the mayor's efforts to replace her.

Lazare never mentions the tremendous grass-roots support her campaign has generated—volunteer meetings of more than 500 more than nine months before the primary or her support among unions, including some of the uniformed services. He completely misunderstands the political meaning of David Dinkins' position. What is important is that Dinkins—a close political associate of potential candidate Denny Farrell for more than 20 years—wouldn't endorse Farrell. He didn't run because Messinger would have received significant support from the black electorate and Farrell would have lost for borough president and then been replaced as Manhattan Democratic county leader.

Any politician in New York must take positions on issues that go far beyond "local politics." Any politician must struggle to become known in and outside their district in a city that devotes very little media attention to political figures who are not mayor or governor. Messinger has succeeded and will succeed as Manhattan Borough president in bringing real leadership to this city precisely because she is not just any "liberal" politician.

Frank Llewellyn
Treasurer, New York Democratic
Socialists of America

Why kill the Messinger?

IT'S HARD TO FIGURE DANIEL LAZARE'S RECENT ARTICLE in *In These Times* (June 7) criticizing New York City Councilwoman Ruth Messin-

ger.

Since she first won elective office in 1977, Ruth has been one of America's leading proponents of grass-roots politics firmly rooted in a democratic socialist perspective. In her district on the West Side of Manhattan and citywide, Ruth has fought for tax equity, small-business rent control and clean government.

Reformers—and it is not a sin peculiar to them—have a tendency to lofty generalizations, passionate opinions and slipshod data. Not Ruth Messinger. She's been rated the best New York City councilmember several years running. That record has earned her broad support from the progressive, minority and trade union community in her current bid to become Manhattan Borough president. Her campaign has mobilized literally thousands of volunteers and raised real money from hundreds of house parties all over the city. Good thing, too, since the vested interests in real estate and development aren't about to give her a nickel.

Far from being the kind of "thoughtless, no-growth" advocate Lazare conjures up, Ruth's perspective has always tilted in favor of development that helps people and provides jobs while preserving New York's neighborhoods.

I'm proud that Ruth is an active member of the Democratic Socialists of America. I'm proud of the work she's done so far and excited about what she can do in the future. I urge all *In These Times* readers to get involved with Ruth's campaign by contacting her at 469 Seventh Avenue, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10018, (212) 268-5033.

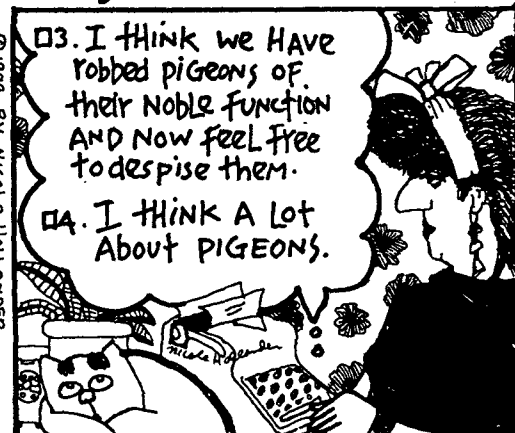
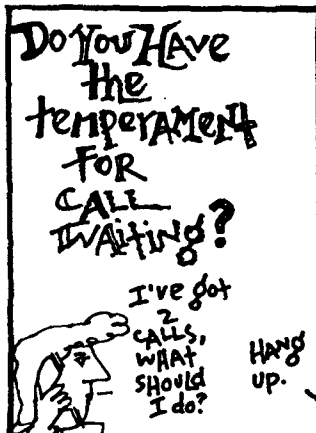
Michael Harrington
National Co-Chair
Democratic Socialists of America

Daniel Lazare replies: All this sound and fury is really beside the point. No matter how unpalatable Messinger's supporters may find it, the fact remains that her campaign for citywide office, a quest that took up the better part of a year and a half, was a flop, which is why she was forced to fall back on the Manhattan Borough presidency as very much a fourth choice. Beyond her normal constituency, her campaign failed to ignite for the very obvious reason of class. While middle-class Manhattanites are primarily concerned with something they call overdevelopment (whatever that phrase may mean), workers are primarily concerned with jobs. Consequently, as I argued in my article, their economic interests in this instance are diametrically opposed.

Further, while it's nice to hear from DSA leaders as esteemed as Jo-Ann Mort or Michael Harrington, readers may be interested

Continued on next page

SYLVIA



by Nicole Hollander

Give Me Liberty and Give Me Vicarious Sex

At least we can have phone sex with one hand and burn the American flag with the other. Give me liberty or give me death. When the Supreme Court overturned flag desecration laws in 48 states, official Washington erupted all over the front pages of the nation's press. Bush bravely announced that "flag burning is wrong—dead wrong—and the flag of the United States is very, very special."

In both houses there was a clamor of indignant voices, none louder than that of Douglas Applegate (D-OH), who shouted, "What in God's name is going on?... America should be outraged. Are there any limitations? Are they going to allow fornication at Times Square at high noon?"

The new House speaker, Tom Foley (D-WA), called the decision "deeply offensive," and his sentiments were echoed by Senate Majority Leader (and former judge) George Mitchell (D-ME), who announced that "every American has the right to speak freely.... It is precisely that vast freedom that renders so unnecessary the condoning of the desecration of the flag as a means of expressing dissent."

The gallant rush to defend Old Glory was formalized when 97 senators supported a resolution expressing "profound disappointment" and vowing to "seek ways to restore sanctions against such reprehensible conduct." Only two Democrats, Kennedy of Massachusetts and Metzenbaum of Ohio, and one Republican, Humphrey of New Hampshire, stood against the lemming rush. Humphrey said he thought it was all "an exercise in silliness ... and a bit of hypocrisy."

Never have members of Congress been so vocal, and so keen to assert their eagerness to legislate in opposition to the decisions of the court. But contrast this lust to assert the powers of the legislature with the actions of these bold politicians as the court, in the month of June, dealt what Rep. Don Edwards (D-CA) called on June 12 "blow after blow to 25 years of progress in

ASHES & DIAMONDS

By Alexander Cockburn

civil rights law."

In the past three weeks the Supreme Court has ruled three times—all 5-4 decisions—against women and minorities. None of the vocal champions of the flag has raised an indignant public clamor about these decisions or pledged speedy legislative action to assert congressional commitments to civil rights.

My colleague Rich McKerrow called the offices of Congress members outspoken on the flag issue to inquire about their responses to Supreme Court rulings on civil rights issues. When he asked, "What is the representative's response to the recent civil rights decisions of the Supreme Court?" he was frequently given the kind of answer offered by a spokesperson for Rep. Les AuCoin's (D-OR): "You mean the flag thing?"

Speaker Foley has "not spoken against the decisions yet." Reps. Applegate and AuCoin have had "no official reactions."

The first of the Supreme Court decisions, involving salmon canneries in Alaska and coming down on June 5, allowed employers essentially to discriminate against women and minorities without justifying their action, on grounds of "business necessity." In the past a company may not have been intentionally discriminatory, but if it followed a particular practice that had a discriminatory impact it could be held liable; then the company had to prove that the practice in question was necessary for the conduct of business. Now the court says the plaintiffs have to prove that the practice is *not* necessary for the conduct of business, as well as being discriminatory.

The second one, a very big one, on June 12 opened up court-approved affirmative action settlements to subsequent legal challenges by white workers. *The New York Times* said "white workers," but presumably the court meant male workers as well, since these plans also deal with sex discrimination, and the case in question was brought by lawyers representing blacks and women. There was a second ruling that day that places time limits on legal challenges to

discriminatory seniority systems. The third decision, on June 22, hinders individuals from bringing damage suits against state and local governments for acts of racial discrimination. Plaintiffs now must prove that discrimination resulted from an official "policy or custom," thus leaving the government open to contend that any discriminatory act is merely a random act of an individual public employee.

Nearly 60 Percent of Israelis Think Civil War Is Coming

Passing briefly through Washington a few days ago was a man I greatly admire. Professor Israel Shahak, who heads the Israel League for Human and Civil Rights and who among other things performs the indispensable service of distributing translations of revealing articles from Israel's Hebrew-language press.

At the end of a week in Washington that included talks in the State Department and on Capitol Hill, Shahak gave me his impressions. So far as the outlook of Secretary of State James Baker and the State Department is concerned, Shahak says that "you can see very easily what their policy is, not from what they say but what they don't say. They're not prepared to quarrel with Shamir on anything political. At the same time they are prepared to encourage covertly anyone prepared to criticize Israel rationally—in the American style—on human rights, specifically on minimum issues of human rights such as the denial of schooling to Palestinian children, denial of essential medical services and so on."

"In the medium range I think that what the U.S. is after can be described as real autonomy, what Egypt wanted after Camp David. It's analogous to the Irish home rule proposal. No implementation of U.N. Resolution 242. No land for peace, but giving Palestinians some real control over some natural resources—water, for example—

and the economy. Everything beyond that is really pro forma declarations that mean nothing, in the manner of the 1982 Reagan initiative."

From his visits to Congress Shahak reckons that there is a body of pressure building up on Congress members from constituents in places like Texas, Utah, Michigan and California demanding that something be done for Palestinian human rights. "On the other hand the whole place is pervaded by this fear of AIPAC [American Israel Public Affairs Committee]. You feel an atmosphere of terror. I think slowly, but in the foreseeable future, a body in the House may try to bring a resolution to the floor criticizing Israel on some minimal human rights issue, either demanding an opening of schools on the West Bank, or at least calling on Israel to give permission for private lessons in homes. After all, there's the powerful precedent of demands on the Soviet Union that Soviet Jews be allowed to have Hebrew lessons in their homes. Overall, I think I detect in Congress a slow drift towards receptivity to hearing a critique of Israel on most points, especially if the critique is backed by proper Israeli citations and by proper condemnation of the American media for hiding the truth."

Beyond this Shahak reckons that the situation will change in Congress only when the tensions in Israel become stronger and more visible. This led, naturally enough, to a question from me about the state of such tensions in Israel.

"Seventy percent of Israelis are open racists. Shamir is threatened mainly from the right. There is, on the other hand, a strong opposition on the other side, which amounts to about 25 percent of the society. What we have now is a straight fight between the racist majority that comes, I'm afraid, from the working class and lower-middle class, and the opposition that comes mainly from the upper class and upper-middle class."

"This opposition is not just against the oppression of Palestinians. It is also against the introduction of slavery into Israel proper. Examples? Palestinian workers are now ordered not to walk in the streets of many Israeli cities. They are brought in, massed in places sometimes surrounded by barbed wire, where employers come to pick them up. The Palestinians work under supervision all day, then are returned to the concentration point and taken back to the West Bank or Gaza. This is worse than the position of the blacks in Soweto, who can walk the streets of Johannesburg."

"It's becoming clear, Shahak went on, "that the continuation of the rule of Shamir can bring to power Sharon and the settlers who will impose on us a Khomeiniesque or Iranian form of Judaism, against the lifestyle of a great part of the population. Prohibition on using cars on Saturday, on swimming in the sea on Saturday and so on."

"The largest circulation newspaper in Israel, *Yedioth Ahronot*, sells more papers on Friday (the day circulations are rated) than all the other papers combined. About half to three-quarters of a million. On June 8 it published a poll (not reported in the U.S.) in which 58 percent of Israeli Jews predicted the outbreak of civil war between Jews and Jews in Israel. This 58 percent was made up, of course, of people from the left and from the extreme right. A crucial date is at the beginning of July, when the Likud Center meets to decide between Shamir and Sharon."

Distributed by L.A. Weekly.

Continued from preceding page

to know that nowhere in her campaign literature or speeches does Ruth Messinger actually refer to herself as a socialist. As far as the average voter is aware, she has nothing more to do with the dreaded S-word than the average Democrat, and apparently neither she nor the big shots in DSA have any intention of setting the record straight. (Anyone remember something about "disdaining to conceal our aims and ambitions"?)

Messinger also happens to be a member of the dovish New Jewish Agenda, but that didn't stop her from joining with the rest of the City Council in July 1987 in calling for the shutting down of the PLO mission to the U.N. She is eloquent on the subject of AIDS, yet has nonetheless opposed the all-important effort to provide heroin addicts with clean needles, evidently because she thinks it will earn her points with Dave Dinkins, Rep. Charles Rangel and other anti-drug warriors. The problem is not so much that Messinger says one thing to her liberal or socialist friends and quite another to voters and potential political allies, but that so-called progressives let her get away with it.

As to Pierce, Morales et al., their letter is

so larded with spurious charges it's hard to know where to begin. Whether or not it's disrespectful to say Dave Dinkins "has raised blandness to an art form," as I did in my article, is beside the point. All that matters is whether it's accurate, which it is. If Dinkins' pointed refusal to endorse Messinger as long as Denny Farrell was in the race was not coolness, what is? In describing Messinger as "partly sidelined by the task of raising two small children" during the late '60s, I was not rendering a moral judgment, merely passing along what the candidate said to me in an interview. How this can be construed as a slur against working women is beyond me. School decentralization has been a central concern of Messinger's for two decades or more, which is why it's not unfair to say she's staked her career on the issue. And as to the still-unresolved nature of the borough presidency, my point was simply that this already minor office is likely to be pared back even further by the city charter commission, which makes Messinger's achievement in capturing it all the more modest.

Her low-profile membership in DSA notwithstanding, I don't think Ruth Messinger is a socialist at all. I think she's a liberal, which

is very different in terms of method, ideology and class loyalty, as Michael Harrington should know. Got it?

Editor's note: Although Daniel Lazare is our esteemed New York correspondent, we do not share his view of Ruth Messinger, or of the importance of her campaign. In our view, Messinger has provided a model for a practical left politics in an era of conservative ascendancy. Starting out as an outsider and the farthest-left member of the New York City Council, treated as a pariah by the Koch administration, she became one of the most visible and widely respected of her colleagues. Her constant defense of the interests of ordinary New Yorkers, and her reliance on grassroots support and organization to win nomination as Manhattan Borough president exemplify the kind of politics we have always espoused. As a prominent member of the Democratic Socialists of America, Messinger has always upheld principles consistent with her socialist beliefs. In the present worldwide confusion over the meaning of socialism, that is much more important to us than the use of the S-word. Some people on the left see success in mainstream politics as proof of betrayal of socialist principles, but we do not.

Say It Ain't So, Ted!

Nightline caught stacking deck against public; pose of objectivity exposed as sham. Koppel miffed, but can't deny facts.

16-Page Report Free to *In These Times* Readers

EXTRA!, the bi-monthly publication of FAIR (Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting), has released a provocative report on Nightline. The publishers will gladly send you a copy free, as your introduction to *EXTRA!*, if you mail the coupon below.

Making a Sham of "Objectivity"

Nightline is one of America's most influential news shows. More than 10 million viewers tune in every night—are they being informed or manipulated? *EXTRA!*'s Nightline Report documents a distressing history of political favoritism, racial bias and gender discrimination. It reveals how Nightline "stacks" its guest list and "frames" its stories to reflect the views of a favored group of corporate interests, right-wing political figures and government power brokers.

Putting Koppel on the Hot Seat

When *EXTRA!* released its report, The New York Times, Washington Post, L.A. Times and other major media quickly turned to Koppel for rebuttal.

"Say it ain't so, Ted," they asked. But Ted *couldn't*. Because *EXTRA!*'s evidence was documented by sociologists at Boston College as part of an in-depth study underwritten by the J. Roderick MacArthur Foundation and the Fund for Investigative Journalism.

Please Respond Promptly

Because the report has provoked wide public comment, we have reprinted it to satisfy demand. A copy will be sent to every *In These Times* reader who requests one. But please respond promptly; *requests honored in order received*.

"The cutting edge of media criticism"—Noam Chomsky

EXTRA! is the prize-winning bi-monthly published by FAIR (Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting), the non-profit independent media watchdog group dedicated to exposing media bias and challenging corporate control of information. Advisors and supporters include Ed Asner, Ben Bagdikian, Helen Caldicott, Noam Chomsky, Alexander Cockburn, Allen Ginsberg, Christopher Hitchens, Maggie Kuhn, Frances Moore Lappe, Jessica Mitford, George Seldes, Eleanor Smeal, Dr. Benjamin Spock, John Stockwell, Roger Wilkins and many more.



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Spike Lee

Continued from page 24

ing of his film. Raheem's death by a cop's hand sparks the riot that provides the film's climactic action. Many students expressed surprise that Lee found fault with the Raheem character; in the absence of clear clues, they assumed the filmmaker intended him as a sympathetic character.

Such misconceptions are common among filmgoers looking for rhetoric in Lee's work; they miss the film while straining to discern the filmmaker's intentions. In some ways the iconoclastic Brooklynite encourages those misconceptions. His fierce denunciations of racism in public appearances connected to *Do the Right Thing* serve to deflect attention from the film's merciless portrayals of the black community's foibles.

One of the most imaginative ascribers of Lee's motives is Stanley Crouch, a black writer who penned a particularly perverse bit of bile on the movie in the June 20 *Village Voice*. Crouch—who started his writing life as a black nationalist poet—is a former *Voice* writer and jazz critic who seems to have become the African-American hit man for the neoconservative cultural front. In recent months Crouch has launched broadsides against the work of authors like the late James Baldwin, Alice Walker and Toni Morrison, and against a more general evil he identifies as "black power thinking." In the true fashion of the repentant convert, Crouch now discerns subversive black nationalist messages everywhere. In the *Voice* article—an amazingly petty, *ad hominem* attack—Crouch dismissed Lee as a short propagandist who shares the fascist aesthetics of Nazi

filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl.

Crouch's appraisal of *Do the Right Thing* as the kind of propaganda that "reduces the world to a shorthand" is exactly what it is not. In fact, Lee's real triumph is his avoidance of one-dimensional characterizations within the context of the film's episodic structure. The Italian-American pizzeria owner, for example, is perhaps the film's most sympathetic character.

Spike's first whites: At times gruff and insensitive, Sal—played by Danny Aiello—clearly cares about his customers. His concerns have limits, however, and when a character named Buggin Out (Giancarlo Esposito) demands Sal include photographs of black stars on his restaurant's all-Italian Wall of Fame, the pizzeria owner strongly suggests he build his own establishment to display his "brothers" photos. But Sal's place is also an anachronism, and his refusal to acknowledge that reality carries its own consequences.

Sal and his two sons Vito and Pino are Lee's first fully realized white characters, and his deft touch fleshes them out admirably. They are drawn as complex people who are trapped in a socio-economic reality that they must accommodate. Lee captures the nuanced relationships between the Italian-American father and his sons, even as he heats up the tensions between them and the neighborhood.

All of this is either missed or ignored by critic Crouch who, in the *Voice* piece, identified Sal as the film's villain. If missed, it says little for Crouch's critical acumen; if ignored, it says much about his political agenda.

It was a political impulse that provoked

the 32-year-old filmmaker to make the movie. Lee has credited the Howard Beach incident—where one black man was killed and two others injured after being attacked near a pizzeria by a gang of white youths in the Queens, New York, neighborhood—for inspiring the original idea for *Do the Right Thing*.

"Someone has to force America to come to grips with the problem of racism," Lee explained following the University of Chicago screening. The notion that this country is now a colorblind society is, he said, not only wrong, but dangerous. "One of the biggest lies out here is that no matter what race or religion you are, it doesn't matter. Now that's a lie, and we all know it. If we don't talk about these problems and take them on, they're going to get much, much worse."

Several students expressed disappointment that Lee's movie character—Mookie—lit the proverbial fuse for the riot, and, because of the film's non-sentimental conclusion, many wondered further if Lee himself advocated burning down white-owned businesses.

"It's a funny thing, but I think very significant, that a lot of white critics always talk about the burning down of Sal's, but never about the murder of Radio Raheem," Lee responded. This society casts blacks as "animals and savages anyway, so it just doesn't matter what happens to them," he added.

Metaphor magic: Radio Raheem lumbers through Lee's film like the metaphor he is. His hulking presence embodies the social forces that conspire to isolate the African-American underclass. By refusing to lower the volume on his huge box, he alienates himself from mainstream society by disregarding its values. But that sense of alienation in turn fuels Raheem's need for the compensatory power of his boom box. His affirmation derives from his decibel level, and the power to be obnoxious is the only power America allows him.

Another significant character is Smiley (Roger Guenveur Smith), a stutterer who strains mightily to express himself in an impatient world. Smiley sells postcards with the historic photographs of Malcolm X's and Martin Luther King's only meeting and he seems perpetually on the verge of telling us something very important, but he just can't get it out. Lee uses countervailing statements of Malcolm and King as a coda to the film.

Mister Señor Love Daddy (Sam Jackson) is the block's 24-hour disc jockey of WE-LOVE radio whose musical selections set the neighborhood mood and whose omnipre-

sence symbolizes the power of music in black culture. During one poignant section of the film, D.J. Love Daddy recites a long list of African-American recording artists; the manta-like effect is magical.

The film is fairly teeming with metaphors, but they seldom intrude on the story. In fact, Lee's smooth incorporation of metaphorical characters into *Do the Right Thing*'s story line demonstrates just how skilled he's become as a filmmaker. He attempts to illuminate sans didacticism, a neat trick that most message-bearing artists never learn.

Lee's use of veteran actors Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee as "Da Mayor" and "Mother Sister" anchors the film to a vague tradition and adds some historical resonance. Their periodic appearances are accompanied by theme music from another era and disorienting camera angles, providing the film with a touch of the surreal.

The third major feature from this country's most promising black filmmaker is a bold and humorous look at some dynamics of inner-city America. Like his previous film *School Daze*, it will probably be a hit for the wrong reasons: its *mise en scène*, its street-level authenticity and its dead-on humor.

But Lee's films reach audiences where they live. His ability to affectionately illuminate the self-deception and cultural conceits that bedevil the African-American community is a function of his racial empathy—not, as critic Crouch would have it, his fascist aesthetics. It is not Lee's burden that some blacks are so starved for authentic media images that they embrace his films as a gesture of racial solidarity.

Lee's public emphasis of the film as an exploration of racism, however, is a strategy intended to tighten that embrace. For *Do the Right Thing* actually is most notable for its unflinching depiction of life in the black inner city. The male irresponsibility, the compensatory braggadocio, the foul-mouthed and brutal methods of child rearing, the entrepreneurial quiescence are on display alongside the quiet struggles to etch out honorable lives in an unyielding environment.

By expanding his filmic vocabulary and sharpening his technical skills, Lee has solidified his position as a torchbearer in the evolution of African-American cinema. By crafting films that trash the genteel sensibilities of those black critics who judge movies solely according to a positive image count, Lee has opened the way for a more mature criticism. By speaking out against racism, Lee has made it more difficult for America to turn its back on its most pressing problem. ■

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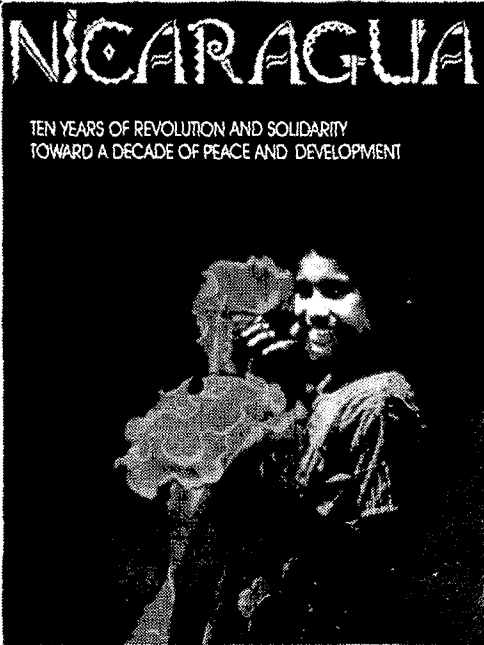
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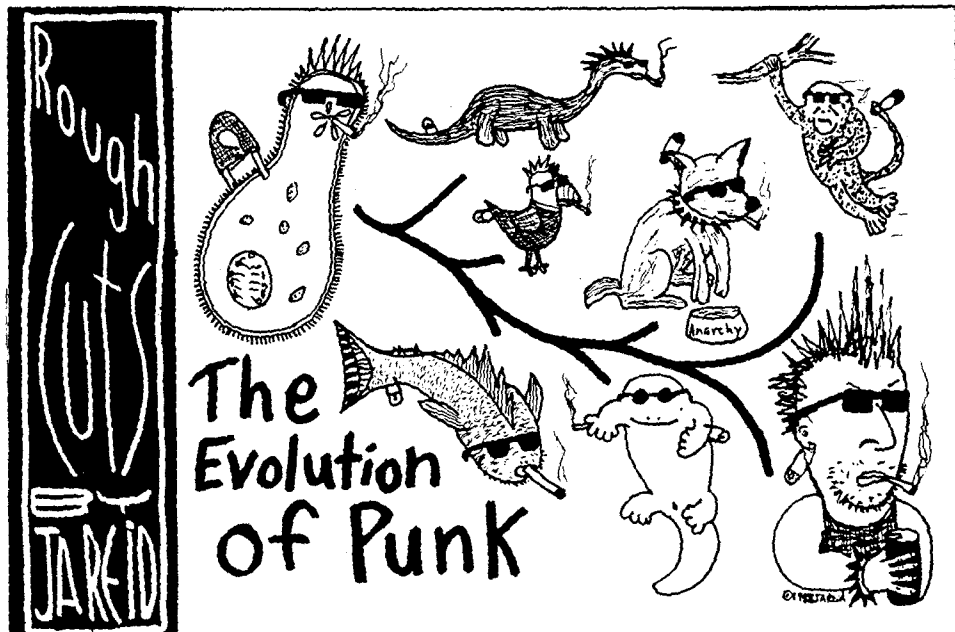
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Mao Prints Kept, Over Objections

By Vince Leo
First Bank System, Division of
Visual Arts; 38 pp.; \$16.95

By Jeremiah Creedon

EVEN IF ALL EYES HAD NOT BEEN on China recently, this book by writer-photographer Vince Leo would be fascinating as a comment on modern mass communications. Among other things, *Mao Prints Kept, Over Objections* is a semiotic coffee-table classic—an unorthodox, visually intriguing effort to trace a famous image through its 30-year circulation in the global economy of signs.

The image is Mao Zedong's official portrait, which was taken by an unknown photographer in 1959, a decade after Mao became chairman of the People's Republic of China. When Andy Warhol used the image as the basis for a print series known as the "Mao Portfolio" in 1972, it had already acquired numerous social and political meanings—many of them contradictory. These meanings continued to accrue throughout the '70s and '80s, as did the monetary value of Warhol's doctored prints.

Adding an aesthetic dimension might have politically neutered a less-powerful image, but not the face of Mao, as more recent events would testify. The image figured again during the protests in Tiananmen Square. Students defaced the huge Mao portrait overlooking the square, only to see the government replace it with an identical replica. Within hours Mao had resumed his unblinking vigil over Chinese history—a history whose writing would be the privilege of those who controlled its ultimate symbol.

A wired world: The student protest and its suppression give Leo's book a special relevance. The events in China are its ongoing epilogue. The semiotic element in this drama—the struggle over Mao's image and the statue called the "Goddess of Liberty and Democracy" that briefly stood in the square—can be seen clearly from Leo's perspective. And so can the fact that in a world wired for instant communication, profound ties exist between the Chinese people and ourselves.

These ties partly explain how Leo got involved with the project. That story begins in 1987, when Warhol's "Mao Portfolio" turned up on display in a Milwaukee bank. The exhibit reappeared a few months later in a bank in suburban Minneapolis. Both were branch offices in the Minneapolis-based First Bank System, whose corporate art program has been called the most daring in the country. The company's Division of Visual Arts was responsible for this reputation—and the Warhol show as well. Their general goal with the Mao project and others was "to pro-



Face lifts on the face of history

note a culture which places a high value on dialogue," and to "challenge orthodox thinking."

With Mao, they succeeded. Customers in both branches complained that the prints were offensive, that Mao had been a Communist and a wartime enemy of the U.S. But those running the visual arts program insisted the show espoused no "particular ideology." Eventually, the Mao prints were kept—over objections.

The visual arts program had been arousing similar debate inside the company for years. Led by curator Lynne Sowder and communications specialist Nathan Braulick, the program had amassed a large but not universally loved collection of contemporary art. According to their "manifesto," Sowder and Braulick chose "the most provocative artists working today because we believe that only through active engagement with innovative, critical cultural practices can we progress as an organization and a community in the flux of a changing world."

For the average person working in a Minneapolis bank, those words were about as soothing as a stickup note.

Faced with growing dissent among First Bank employees, the visual arts program introduced two compromises: Talkback, a way for workers to voice their opinions about company art; and Controversy Corridor, or the hall in corporate headquarters where any piece could be relegated if six workers signed a petition stating their objections to it.

Work by Cindy Sherman and others quickly got the boot, but the record went to a newly hung piece by Jonathan Borofsky called "Male Aggression." It was "banished" to Controversy Corridor within an hour.

Growing interest: The new policies created a safety valve for

venting in-house tensions. They may also have signaled a new, less flamboyant era for the visual arts program, a turn of affairs that other corporate curators were no doubt following with interest. An art acquisitions budget that reached \$500,000 in 1986 fell to zero in 1988, and a sympathetic president who had lost a lot of the company's money was on his way out.

ART

Meanwhile, there was the Mao flap, which threw the debate over corporate art into the public realm.

Leo, who works out of Minneapolis, stepped into this milieu with a strange commission. As an independent artist, he was to "examine the interrelations between First Bank, China, U.S. foreign policy, the lives of Mao and Andy Warhol, the Visual Arts program and those customers and employees who found the exhibition objectionable."

And so he did, quite well, with some inspired help from graphic designer Brenda Dane.

The result is an archival collage of photographs, documents, maxims, survey comments, iconic symbols and chronological facts. It is also a subtle apologia for the Mao exhibit—and, even more subtly, an argument for the art program's continued existence.

The book's title was originally the headline for a story in the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, which Leo has reprinted on the book's cover. It states that the Mao prints would remain on view

despite protests from a police chief and others who thought the images were an insult to Korean War veterans. The book opens with a photocopied record of the correspondence between these people and bank officials. Leo interjects no editorial comment. The letters are followed by a "timetable" of some 380 factual entries, where Leo, again without comment, weaves the various narratives he has investigated into a single idiosyncratic history.

Photos of the famous Mao image alternate from page to page with the text. Their captions reveal only the most basic information about them, but viewers can see that the meaning attached to the recurring figure in all these photos—Mao—is in no way the same. It shifts with the setting.

In 1968 the Mao image gazes from two vantages that are worlds apart: nailed to a tall stick in a field worked by Chinese peasants, and taped to a pillar, along with posters of Marx and Lenin, above well-dressed young urbanites at the Communist Party headquarters during the Paris uprisings. Richard Nixon, George and Barbara Bush, Andy Warhol and Chinese students watching the televised trial of Mao's widow—all are photographed in the presence of the endlessly reproducible—and redefinable—Mao.

The book's final photograph, taken by Leo, is of Warhol's Mao hanging in the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. The work is mounted on the grillwork of a cage-like recess—as if to suggest that here, in the zoo of art, a politically dangerous image could be viewed without fear. It is a fate oddly reminiscent of China's other great icon in the West—the panda—the first of which arrived in this country in 1936. Its name, Leo mentions, was Soo Lin.

Thus the book ends. But in the Confucian universe, "after the end" brings only the beginning, where old energies are restored. Sooner or later Mao's image was destined to

be at large again. It was sooner.

Postmodern primer: Leo's compilation succeeds where a traditional essay or research piece might not have, at least not so vividly. There could hardly be a more succinct illustration of certain ideas and forces at play in this world, which together form the theoretical lattice for that nebulous thing called postmodernism. *Mao Prints Kept* can be read as a kind of primer on such concepts: on the relation between economics and art, the mass media and their audiences, the state and its subjects. It is also a model of an age where various cultures exist in simultaneous, mutually observed and yet vastly different realities.

Leo's archival collage raises the question of where artistry best resides in a creative work these days. Devoid of literary style, overt thesis and narrative voice, this book nonetheless reveals a creative intelligence asserting itself through juxtaposition, collation and synthesis. Leo's book epitomizes the impulse to catalogue and to review that resonates in much contemporary art—and which critics often mistake for a cheap preoccupation with mass culture. The search for patterns and order within this chaos of data is a worthy enterprise. In certain hands, it can also be art.

Another question is, of course, whether an artist working at the behest of a bank can really be independent. A jaded observer would doubt it and could never believe that a corporation would display any aesthetic other than expediency—that is, it would promote only art that heightened its public image, or perhaps increased employee output by stirring "creativity." This latter rationale involves the sort of goofy logic that only a CEO with no idea what art is would ever fall for.

The Division of Visual Arts at First Bank has been altogether more ambitious. The Mao exhibit and other programs suggest they are sincere in wanting to be "a catalyst for change in corporate culture" and to examine "the subtle relationships between truth, propaganda, ideology and the media." But art appreciation, like the current talk about "ethics," may itself be a corporate indulgence, a show of power. The very willingness to entertain the call for change and social responsibility may be the false graciousness of a company in no fear of experiencing either.

Leo's timetable, like Confucian philosophy, implies that plenitude never lasts forever. The fate of First Bank's visual art program may come to resemble, on a far less tragic plane, the fate of that crude statue erected to Liberty in Tiananmen Square. For the American corporate curator as well as the Chinese student struggling for democracy, it may indeed be a curse to live in "interesting times."

Jeremiah Creedon is a writer living in Minneapolis.

IN THESE TIMES JULY 5-18, 1989 19

By Eric Lindbom

Comicbook Confidential, the movie

THESE DAYS IT'S EASY TO CONFUSE the movie section of the newspaper with the funnies. Comic book-inspired movies are pouring out of Hollywood. *Popeye*, four *Supermans* and a *Supergirl* are faucet drips compared to the coming deluge.

The *Swamp Thing* sequel just left town, and *Spiderman* is on deck. Next year promises Warren Beatty as *Dick Tracy*, Arnold Schwarzenegger as combat he-man *Sgt. Rock*, as well as *Archie*, an animated Jetsons movie and Bullwinkle and Rocky's archenemies *Boris and Natasha*. No wonder Jim Belushi claims his dream role is Fred Flintstone.

The rationale for cashing in on comic book characters is a familiarity factor in line with the "high concept" dogma that still rules the movie industry. Since viewers have mutual associations with these heroes and villains, the spin-offs sell themselves through almost built-in hype.

So Warner Bros.' canny marketing for *Batman* borders on subliminal advertising with that inescapable bat insignia invading our peripheral vision space and conditioning us to march out to the movie without thinking. The insignia was appropriated by kids on the street and T-shirt designers worldwide before the real publicity push even started (see accompanying story).

Yet while studios want us to pay increasingly stiff ticket prices to watch rehashes of famous comic icons, many of today's brightest inkers, artists and comic writers rethink and pervert these archetypes. A decade ago these new cartoonists would have been underground artists. Now they work with the blessing of the biggest comic houses. For instance, Frank Miller's revisionist "Dark Knight" series, with its angry, mysterious Batman and homicidal Joker, was sanctioned and sold by DC Comics, which owns the rights to the normally goody-goody version of the character.

These cartoonists benefit from an older reading audience that wants to keep buying comics but needs more mature, enticing and forbidding kicks than *Archie*, *Thor* or *Richie Rich* can reasonably supply. Now, new, nihilistic super anti-heroes operate in decaying urban environments, and their stories are twinged with violence, sex and black humor.

Alan Moore brilliantly devised the last word on the post-superhero era, the minutely detailed epic *Watchmen*. It's populated by morally dubious crime fighters like Rorschach, a psycho who wears an ink blot test as a mask and ends up jailed. More existential than the Incredible Hulk, he warns his fellow convicts, "I'm not locked in here with you; you're locked in here with me!" The biggest buzz among comic freaks is news

that the movie will be tackled by Terry Gilliam, Hollywood's ultimate outsider.

Scapegoat to signifier: A short course in what's next is *Comicbook Confidential*, a splashy, entertaining and well-timed documentary that charts the zigzag course of comics from novelty to scapegoat then down to the underground and back up as a hip, cutting-edge signifier.

For Canadian director Ron Mann, it completes a pop cultural trilogy that began exploring jazz musicians (*Imagine the Sound*) and poets who use music and performance art to get heard (*Poetry in Motion*).

Designed as a history of comic books, *Comicbook Confidential* is more a dizzying thumbnail sketch, whizzing through World War II and its patriotic heroes like Jack Kirby's Captain America, so Mann can focus on his core theme of censorship. The film chronicles the scrutiny comics have faced almost since day one (supposedly 1933 when William M. Gaines folded a newspaper so the comic section was exposed and sold it at his newsstand).

His son, William M. Gaines Jr., won the censors' wrath with EC comics like *Vault of Horror* and *Haunt of Fear*, which perfected the macabre-twist ending long before *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *Twilight Zone*. EC also dished out gore, with lurid covers (a severed arm dangling from a subway strap), and they still scare; HBO is airing a critically touted *Tales from the Crypt* series, luring names like Roger (Rabbit) Zemeckis, Walter Hill and Richard Donner to direct favorite EC stories.

In their day the comics were at-

tacked and eventually banned by a Senate subcommittee that eliminated EC pet words "terror" and "weird" from comic titles. EC never recovered, but Gaines Jr. got his revenge by starting *Mad* magazine.

The film shows how cartoon panels were altered to win Comic Code approval. There's also a *Reefer Madness*-style clip showing young boys who appear to be angel-dusted from reading comics; one stabs a jackknife into a tree while another pounds rocks together.

Mann uses two great gimmicks—

FILM

first, he invites 22 cartoonists to read aloud from their own work. Second, he creates movement without animation by panning the camera within their cartoon panels.

This splashy documentary charts the zigzag course of comics from novelty to scapegoat to cutting-edge signifier.

This technique beautifully captures the film-noirish look of *The Spirit*, a groundbreaking '40s comic. Will Eisner was asked to create a costumed hero to be run regularly in a newspaper. He invented a private dick and just put a mask on

him. But everything else about *The Spirit* was new, especially the often-large visual gaps between panels.

"Comics are a medium apart from animated film because they ask you to use your imagination and move them in your mind," Eisner said by phone from his Florida home.

Many of Eisner's graphic innovations resulted from the struggle of recapping an ongoing story in the tight space restraints of a newspaper. He perfected the "splash page"—a one-page, one panel intro that brings the reader up to date, setting the mood and establishing the premise.

More interested in the aesthetics of the layout than the power of a trademark, Eisner refused to produce a uniform "Spirit" logo, to the chagrin of his editors. "I employed the logo as part of the story instead of making it fundamental artwork every week; it was a situation where creativity and practicality didn't work well together."

Like Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe, *The Spirit* was vulnerable and human, always getting beaten up by thugs he knew too well.

Eisner says his stories were influenced by the great short-story writers like Saki, O. Henry and Lardner, and *The Spirit* has a pulp feel. Though his drawing is often called cinematic, he cites the "Rembrandt lighting" techniques popular in stage productions of the day as more influential than movies, though he acknowledges debts to Fritz Lang and Orson Welles.

"Comics are my medium, but in those days other writers looked at [cartoonists] as *untermensch*. It was

like working in burlesque; they thought it was a cheap medium and a lot of it was junk," Eisner says.

Yet in Mann's film Eisner recalls times when he could foresee a day when comics would become serious works in themselves. For this reason, he believes, the film is well-timed. "Comics are growing as a literary form; it's important that someone came out and documented this cultural growth," he says.

Eisner helped usher in the literary phase of comics in the mid-'70s, writing *Contract with God* "about our perceived relationship with God, set in the Depression in the Bronx." It's still a brisk seller in the relatively new "graphic novel" genre.

Crumbs from the underground: Mann spends considerable screen time examining '60s underground comics, which found their principal voice in the warped yet hilarious work of R. Crumb. A disgruntled greeting card illustrator, Crumb left Ohio for Haight-Ashbury, where he parodied the hippie era through X-rated characters like Fritz the Cat and Mr. Natural.

The '60s scene (visually jump-started by the poster art of Victor Moscoso) revolved around *Zap*, a comic that featured work by Crumb, Spain Rodriguez (who invented the biker badass Trashman—perhaps the first socialist comic hero) and Gilbert Shelton (whose *Freak Brothers* declared, "Dope gets you through times of no money better than money gets you through times of no dope").

Mann interviews all these culprits and shows how the underground scene went through its shock-arama, enema period and now is moving in more political directions. Among the women cartoonists profiled are the overtly political Sue Coe, who proudly calls her book *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa* "comic propaganda," and the popular Lynda Barry, who gives the funniest dramatic reading, a facetiously dewey-eyed look at menstruation.

Since today's fertile comic scene is too broad to generalize about, Mann highlights what he likes. And his film has been criticized for spending too much time on "fringe" comics—like *Raw*, a coffee table-styled publication co-edited by Art Spiegelman, author of *Maus*, the famous cat-and-mouse graphic novel that recasts the Holocaust.

However, the esoteric final third of *Comicbook Confidential* does help show new directions comics can take that are neither mythological nor polemical.

With luck, Hollywood will take note. When Jaime Hernandez read from the voluptuously drawn *Love and Rockets* series—with its young Hispanic characters living through day-to-day struggles, I thought, "Now, there's a movie I'd like to see."

Eric Lindbom is a writer living in New York.



Batman
Directed by Tim Burton

By Jeff Reid

OVERHEARD TEEN EXCHANGE before the coming attractions at Chicago's first day of *Batman*, amid the thump-awump of the Prince soundtrack album:

"This better be great; I am so fuckin' psyched."

"Yeah, I am just way stoked for this."

Indeed, stoking on the promotional side of the equation for Warner Bros. \$30 million bat-tacular had been going strong for some time. By May seemingly every bicycle messenger in Manhattan was hurtling bat-clad through gridlock. And over on the West Side at the National Stationery Show in the cavernous Javits Center, anything with a bat on it was flying out the door. Caps, underwear, socks, buttons—you name it, it was battled.

Bat by popular demand: Bat buzz seriously hit the streets. I overheard no fewer than four kids in four different parts of the city say, "I gotta get me one of them Batman T-shirts." Holy trend, Batman, those knockoff gift joints in Chinatown were swarming with unauthorized bats and those always-authorized buyers. Looks like a bat case of promotional hyperdrive.

In a way, I suppose, we had all been "psyched." And not just by the Warner publicity machine. (Though they obviously did the most to get this big furball rolling. There was more than a touch of promotional self-pollination going on: DC Comics, which controls rights to the Batman character, is owned by Warners; the Prince *Batman* soundtrack is on, wait for it, Warner Bros. Records. Given this incestuous backdrop, it's hardly surprising that the film's executive producers' next project is *Monopoly: The Movie*.)

Other factors contributing to the swelling *Batgeist* include:

- The current (eternal?) reoccurrence of all things '60s (such as TV's *Batman*);

- A legion of rabid Bat-heads collecting comic books and swapping memorabilia;

- Vigilante volk "hero" Bernie Goetz;

- Demographics—yuppies' nerdish fellow travelers may not buy Beemers, but they purchase tons o' other stuff;

- The enduring Hollywood trend toward comics, which even the *Howard the Duck* debacle couldn't alter (*Popeye*, *Annie*, *Swamp Thing* and the upcoming *Watchmen*, *Dick Tracy* and *Flintstones*);

- The elegance of the Batman logo makes it easy to see and a snap to reproduce;

- Frank Miller's slick disaffected take on the caped crusader, *The Dark Knight Returns* (see *In These Times*, Jan. 14, 1987);

- The general "adult" drift in comics;

Summer's sign the times

- The general comic drift in "adults."

The *Batgeist* has produced a promo-biz quantum leap. In previous promotional epochs consumers wore T-shirts as endorsements for

shirts at this very instant. It's a great country, one full of, if not actual productive economic opportunity, at least boundless commercial permutations.

So it's oddly appropriate when the film's opening-credits sequence—a series of tenebrous tracking shots through eerie crevices and caves—turns out to be not a journey to the bat's lair but a micro tour of the bat logo. It's a nifty little turn which shows that director Tim Burton knows what kind of marketing tiger he has by the tail—and he happily gives the beast an extra tug or two for the sheer hell of it.

It also displays Burton's penchant for juking with scale and herky-jerky narrative (evidenced previously in *Beetlejuice* and *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*). Burton's skewed *Batman* is full of hairpin plot turns, oddball comic book angles and

claustrophobic closeups. His Gotham City is art-drecko futurism à la Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, populated by glum city dwellers straight out of *Meet John Doe*. It's all steam and litter, hats and lapels. His botched modernism has a mangled beauty that owes much to the dystopia chic epitomized by such films as *Blade Runner* and *Brazil*, as well as fiction's cyberpunk fringe.

Yet for all the stylish action and dark bustle, *Batman* is a kind of gentler adventure flick. It's neither the exhilarating grim carnival ride of *Robocop* nor the excruciating downhill slide of that runnerless sled, *Indiana Jones and the Fast Buck Made* (Lucre Speedbuck). Burton makes time to tell his story, despite the ample array of gizmos and special effects. Of course he does have actors to work with, not just robots like the clunky Harrison Ford.

The good, the bat and the ugly:

The pre-emptive shrieks of Bat-heads notwithstanding, Michael Keaton fills the cowl adequately. As millionaire Bruce Wayne he's distracted to the brink of disincorporation—his eyes do all the work even as Bruce's life force seems to wane. He gets physical as Batman, though the confines of his black bat armor musculature occasionally leave him looking uncomfortably like Bat-mannequin. Batmobile and Batplane notwithstanding, however, Batman's bulletproof skin is definitely his strong suit.

Kim Basinger plays photographer Vicki Vale—she's a looker in both senses of the word, and she's hot on Batman's trail. Basinger isn't given much to do except look tousled and push the outside of the voluptuousness envelope, but she breathes what life she can into her cartoon dame.

Jack Nicholson curls his lip to comic villain perfection even before Batman dunks him in a vat of toxic chemicals, thereby creating the Joker. After this noxious bath, the vain sociopath becomes a permanently grinning psychotic and a homicidal "performance" criminal. Nicholson cackles, and the dialogue crackles. ("You're insane," screams Vicki. "Gee," says creepy calm Joker Jack. "I thought I was a Pisces.")

If the Joker is a psychological disaster area, Batman isn't much better off. He's been pushed into his nocturnal avenger mode by seeing his parents gunned down as a child. So when Batman creates the Joker, it's just one more link in the twisted chain of crime—it's a criminal double helix replicating out of control.

Batman makes his own doppleganger, and the film too has its flipside. The wealthy vigilante motif plays an ominous counterpoint to Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* (see story on page 24). In both films, mounting urban injustice leads to psychological distortion and, ultimately, to violence. Lee's

superheated Bed-Stuy neighborhood of Brooklyn is an inescapable world of antic dread and sparking racial hatred. Meanwhile, *Batman* blandly proffers lawless retribution as escapist entertainment.


Capitalism, and all that: It's not that the movie does so in an ideological or systematic way—*Batman* the film is as wracked by warring impulses as its protagonist. *Batman* is clearly a product of the committee approach and the high-concept school of film packaging—compromises are evident all around: action for kids of all ages, gizmos galore and super-stylized characters for Bat-heads, no cusswords or gore as a tip of the hat to Tipper et al., a roiling subtext for the eggheads, a soundtrack by that psychosexual marauder Prince (though make sure he doesn't do anything too weird), some cathartic retribution for the crime-weary masses, a likable psychotic for a hero, a less likable but more captivating psychotic as a villain and last, but not least, toss in

For all its action and dark bustle, *Batman* is a kind of gentler adventure flick.

the intimation of sex—without the intimacy. But unlike much committee work—whether it's done by the central committee or the Hollywood kind—*Batman* is largely successful (although a major Swiss cheese in the plausibility department, it managed to make a record \$43 million the first weekend).

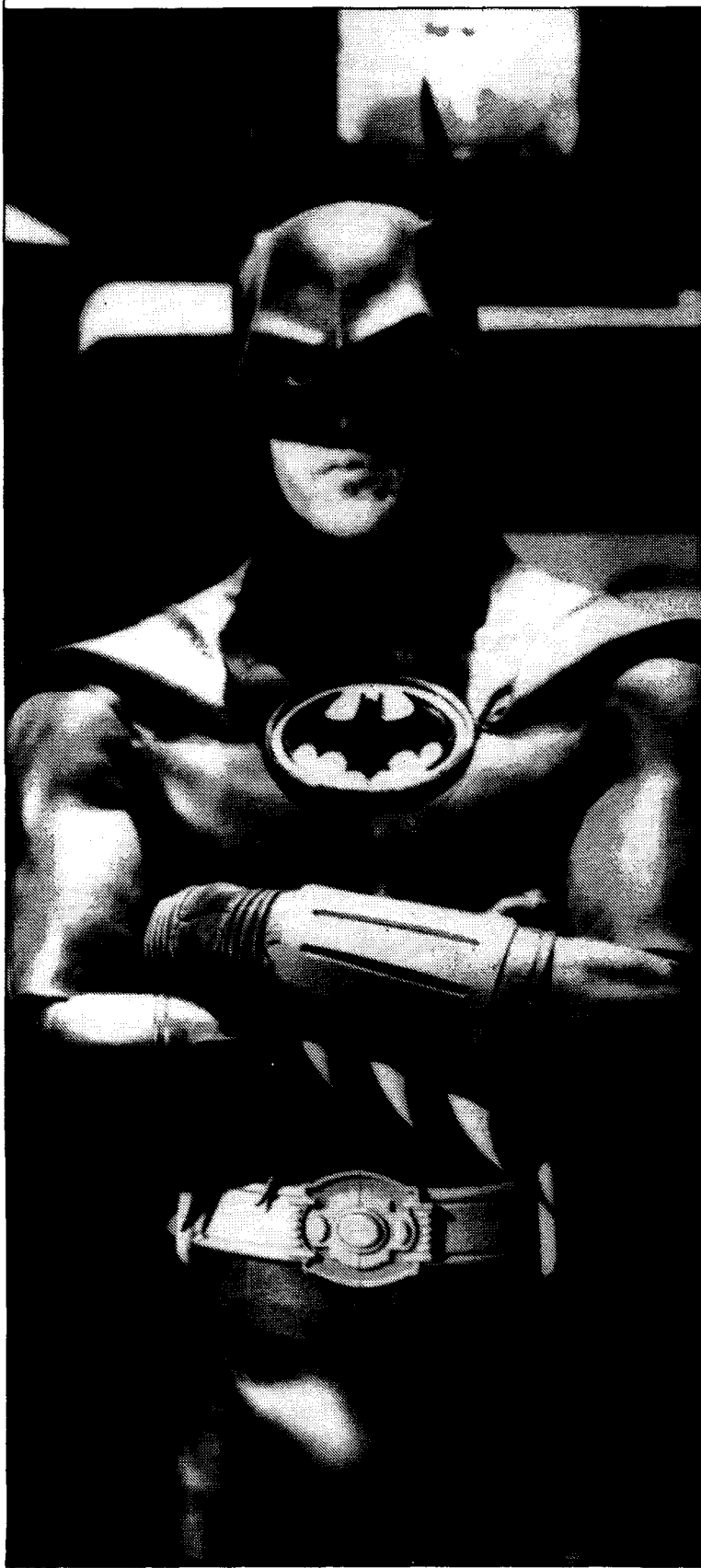
In its attempt to be most things to most people, at least *Batman* didn't try to become the "feel-good hit of the season." (*It's a cuddly buddy picture that gives you the warm fuzzies; take the whole family to see Bat Boys...Michael Deadwood, Geek Previews.*)

Even with most of the corners rounded off, *Batman* is a livable compromise (especially when you figure two hours of air conditioning into the deal). If our government's central committees would do the right things to make equivalent compromises, perhaps Spike Lee's burning social realism wouldn't be so necessary. Granted, there are always better ways to spend \$30 million than on a disposable summer movie, but when was the last time anyone spent money in the *best possible way*?

Besides, it's fun to roam with the herd when they're onto something good. Yeah, yeah, I know, that roiling subtext is bubbling beneath the surface—capitalism's voracious maw and all that. Hell, it's summer and the surface is boiling, too. I gotta get me one of them Batman T-shirts. 

Bootleg Batman T-shirts are available for about \$3.99 at fine knockoff joints everywhere.

Batgeist overkill: Dark Knight of ours, sold.



NEW YORK

July 10-21

THE NEW YORK MARXIST SCHOOL
The 12th National Intensive Summer School, with Harry Magdoff, Ralph Miliband, Sungur Savran, Martha Herbert, Charlie Post, Juliet Ucelli and Ed Ott. Curriculum includes Marxist Theory of History; Science, Society and the Individual; Marxist Capital; and U.S. Capitalism and Working-Class Politics. \$200. Limited scholarships available. NYMS, 79 Leonard St., New York, NY 10013, (212) 941-0332.

CINCINNATI

July 21-23

The National Organization for Women (NOW) will hold a national conference to mobilize its national abortion rights campaign at the Cincinnati Conven-

C A L E N D A R

tion Center. In the first national gathering since the Webster decision, NOW organizers will use this meeting as an opportunity to coordinate an intensive abortion rights campaign targeted by state. The weekend event will feature training seminars, workshops, plenary sessions and a rally. For more information, contact NOW, 1000 16th St. NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036-5705, (202) 331-0066.

OAXTEPEC, MORELOS MEXICO

July 23-28

50th Anniversary Reunion of Latin American Friends Service Projects sponsored by AFSC and SEDEPAC. For more information contact American Friends Service Committee, 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102, (215) 241-7159.

ANN ARBOR, MI

July 27-30

The Center for Popular Economics presents Summer Institute 1989, sponsored by the Center for Progressive Education. The institute will be held at the University of Michigan Dana Building. Some of the topics include unemployment and inflation, corporate profits and productivity, and the economics of racism and sexism. The cost will be \$225 for individuals; \$300 for organization representatives. Meals provided. Housing accommodations can be arranged and childcare can be provided upon request. Scholarships available. An additional workshop on urban issues will also take place July 31 and Aug. 1. For more information contact Pam O'Leary, Center for Progressive Education, 6 Marshall Court, Ann Arbor, MI 48104, (313) 662-0372.

CHICAGO

July 28-30

The annual Midwest Academy Retreat will be held at the Westin Hotel O'Hare. The conference, co-sponsored by Citizen Action, has become one of the most important and exciting gatherings of progressives in the country. A lineup of national speakers, candidates and leaders begins a program of trainings, discussions and workshops on health care, campaign skills, the environment, the economy, family issues, civil rights and much more. The registration fee is \$85. For more information: Midwest Academy Retreat, 225 W. Ohio #250, Chicago, IL 60610, (312) 645-6010.

LOVELAND, OH

July 29

Grailville presents the fourth and final of its "Saturday Special" workshops: Skills for Peacemaking.

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The workshop will explore and experiment with peacemaking skills similar to the study of a foreign language. Such topics as the language of aggression and competition, centering, paraphrasing, celebrating differences and other positive ways to approach conflicts will be addressed. Conducted by Traude Rebmann, she has held similar workshops in Germany and has supervised Peace Volunteers throughout the world for EIRENE, a movement for International Christian Service for Peace. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For registration and additional information contact Grailville, 932 O'Bannonville Rd., Loveland, OH 45140, (513) 683-2340.

TORONTO

August 9-13

The 8th Assembly of The Fourth World presents "Decentralist Congress, Making the World Healthy, Happy and Whole" at the University of Toronto, Canada. Featured speakers include Ivan Illich, Leopold Kohr and John Papworth. The Congress will include forums on community economics, organizing for change, bioregions, communication strategies, and profound spiritual transformation. The Fourth World is a movement to enhance the quality of all life in the biosphere through the development of a decentralist philosophy and specific actions. For more information contact The School of Living, 3030 Sleepy Hollow Rd., Falls Church, VA 22042, (703) 237-7507.

MIDDLE EAST

Sept. 23-Oct. 10

"A Pilgrimage of Peace," a Middle East study tour sponsored by New Jewish Agenda of Santa Fe, N.M. A unique opportunity to meet Israelis and Palestinians who care about peace and work together to overcome differences. 1989 cost \$2,000 inclusive from New York. Contact: Arline Goldberg, Rt. 14, Box 257, Santa Fe, NM 87505, (505) 471-4861.

MANAGUA, NICARAGUA

November 2-11

7th Annual North America-Nicaragua Health Colloquium; November 2-11, 1989; Managua, Nicaragua. Unique opportunity for technical and personal exchange with wide range of Nicaraguan health workers. Includes teaching, fact-finding, tours. Contact: CHRICA, 347 Dolores #210, San Francisco, CA 94110, (415) 431-7760.

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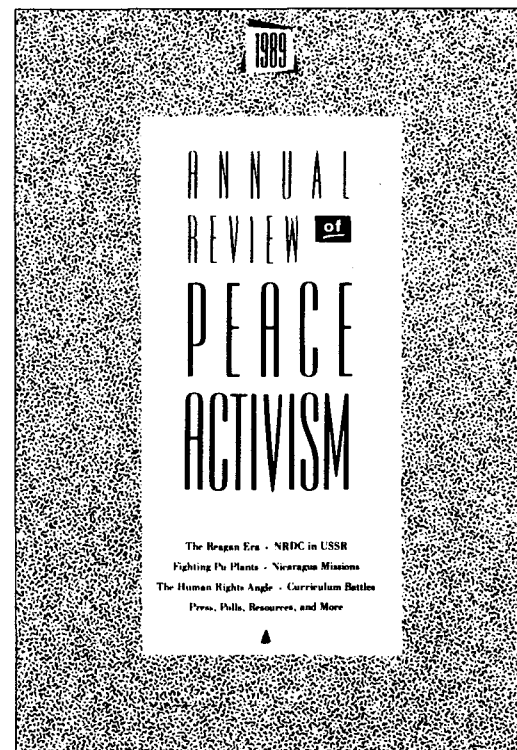
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C L A S S I F I E D S

The North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) has two positions open. CO-EDITOR: Work with current Co-Editor on all editorial and production aspects of NACLA's bimonthly magazine, including developing stories, assigning writers and in-house production. Some writing, research and travel. Requirements include agreement with NACLA's perspective, knowledge of South American politics and economics, fluency in Spanish, editing skills and experience, production experience or ability to learn. \$24,000, four weeks paid vacation, medical coverage. Starting date Sept. 1. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Responsibilities include oversight of 4-person staff, fundraising, personnel, long-term planning. Requirements include agreement with NACLA's perspective, knowledge of Latin American politics and economics, experience in management and fundraising. \$32,000, four weeks paid vacation, medical coverage. Starting date Oct. 1. Resumes to Mark Fried, NACLA, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115.

H.E.R.S., a Chicago feminist health care referral organization, seeks part-time RESOURCE COORDINATOR. \$7 per hour, consumer and provider contacts, resource evaluation, office management, benefits. (312) 248-0166 for more information.

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PUBLICATIONS

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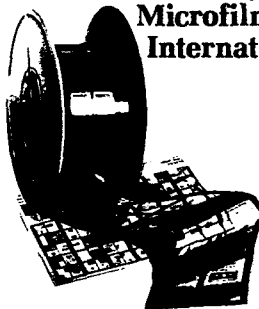
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LIFE IN HELL

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WHAT DID PEOPLE DO AT NIGHT BEFORE THERE WAS TV?
DO ANTS HAVE SOULS?
WHAT DOES HUMAN FLESH TASTE LIKE?
WHAT IF THE OPPOSITE SEX ARE ALL REALLY MARTIANS?
WHO INVENTED THE IDEA OF STICKING YOUR GUM UNDER THE TABLE IN RESTAURANTS?
DON'T PLANTS GET BORED JUST SITTING THERE?
DO SLUGS DREAM?
DO CARS FEEL PAIN WHEN THEY CRASH?
WHAT IF EVERYONE IN THE WORLD IS A ROBOT EXCEPT ME?
ARE STARVING CHILDREN ON TV REALLY REAL?
IF CATS THOUGHT THEY COULD GET AWAY WITH IT, WOULD THEY MURDER US ALL IN OUR SLEEP?
DID PEOPLE IN THE OLD DAYS REALIZE HOW CORNY THEY WERE?
HOW DO YOU REALLY KNOW FOR SURE WHEN A QUESTION HAS BEEN ANSWERED?
WHY CAN'T I HAVE ANOTHER COOKIE?

Doing the Spike Thing

Director Spike Lee
burns up the screen
with a hot slice of life.

By Salim Muwakkil

SPIKE LEE'S NEW FILM, *DO THE RIGHT THING* is a scathingly critical portrayal of the black inner-city circa 1989 and thus is the latest in a growing list of evidence that African-American filmmakers have lost their dread of the "negative images" taboo. This is good news. For although the taboo was intended to help counteract racist depictions of African-Americans, it has served primarily as an aesthetic strait-jacket.

All of Lee's work violates this delicate intraracial etiquette. But his touch is so empathetic, his portrayals so lovingly rendered, Lee's movies disarm all but the most ardent image police. Like his two previous films, *She's Gotta Have It* and *School Daze*, *Do the Right Thing* holds a mirror up to the black community and unflinchingly reflects what it finds.

Lee, the writer, director and co-star of all his films, does not avert his gaze from the self-destructive behavior patterns that so thoroughly sap black America's strength, but neither does he judge them. Indeed, his impartial depictions of black lives in all their contradictory glory lend to Lee's films an almost anthropological authenticity. And when he focuses on the problem of white racism in *Do the Right Thing*, it is a similarly thoughtful treatment.

Since Lee also withholds many of the cinematic cues that traditionally tell audiences what to think, his work is often misunderstood. His movies have been successful (produced for \$175,000, *She's Gotta Have It* earned \$7 million; *School Daze* cost \$6.5 million and made \$14 million), but Lee's refusal to make clear his judgments has probably limited their popularity among audiences weaned on formulaic narrative.

In yo' face: His latest film chronicles the comings and goings of various characters in one block of Brooklyn's predominantly black Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood on the hottest day of the year. Most of the action is centered

around Sal's Famous Pizzeria, a white-owned establishment that has been in the community for more than 20 years. In the stifling heat, long subdued racial tensions begin building and finally explode in death and destruction.

Right from the opening credits, *Do the Right Thing* is in your face. Rosie Perez' hip-hop body language immediately commands the audience's attention and rap group Public Enemy's

Mookie

newest bit of booming agitrap demands it. "Fight the Power," the controversial group's aggressive anthem not only opens the film, it also precipitates the violent action that concludes it. The pulsating music is used as a weapon by the movie's only victim, Radio Raheem. "It's the only song I like," Raheem responds when asked why he never changes the tape on his gigantic boom box.

"If Radio Raheem had just turned off his damned radio, nothing would have happened," Lee told an audience at the University of Chicago following a screen-

Continued on page 18